



# Mentoring:

Advice for parents

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Foundation



# Advice for Parents

More and more young people in school are getting involved in mentoring. So, what is it and how might it help your son or daughter?

A mentor is a person who wants to help another person develop and grow - someone who will get to know them, give them advice and encouragement and share with them their own school or work experience. In school life, a mentor becomes a unique and valuable educational resource who can contribute to the progress made by any young person in developing skills, whether they be academic, social or personal.

Many schools have mentoring programmes where adults from business or the community volunteer to become mentors to pupils. Some schools use older pupils to support younger ones, especially if they are new to the school, or to give them some help with their studies.

## What does a mentor do?

A mentor sets time aside from their school or working day, to meet with a young person. Meetings take place during or at the end of the school day. If lessons are missed, efforts are made to make sure it is not the same lesson every time. The frequency of meetings can vary from half an hour to an hour, every two to three weeks.

The school will have set out the overall aims of the mentoring programme and within that the mentor and the young person work out together what they want to achieve from their relationship. Some examples of how a mentor might help a young person are by:

- encouraging them to maximise their potential at school
- helping them with time management and organisational skills
- helping with their studies
- finding out information for them or helping them to find it
- helping them to find out more about work and what it's like
- encouraging them to attend school regularly, be punctual and hand in their coursework on time

## Do mentors from outside the school undergo security checks?

Yes. Child protection is of the utmost importance. Mentors have to undergo checks for their suitability to work with children and young people which usually includes a check on their police records and references.

## How are young people paired with mentors?

Both mentors and young people volunteer to become part of a programme and to commit time to meet regularly. They will then be 'matched' by the school, often according to interests or something they have in common which is usually established through a meeting or by filling in a questionnaire about themselves.

## How long will the mentoring last?

That depends on the programme - anything from several months to two years, depending on the programme's objectives and the wishes of the mentor and the young person. Sometimes mentoring relationships end more quickly than expected. For example, a mentor may move to a new area, a young person may decide they no longer wish to see their mentor or the programme may have achieved its objectives.

During the programme, the school will monitor progress and check that young people and mentors are happy with each other and wish to continue to meet.

## How can you help?

If your child is given a mentor, you can remind them to keep their appointments. Sometimes appointments have to be cancelled, especially if your child is ill and away from school. Your child should have the phone number of their mentor's place of work so last minute changes can be made. The school will also have the mentor's contact details.

You might want to consider becoming a mentor yourself for a young person at another school and find out what is really involved.

## Some comments from young people who have been mentored

"I see her as a friend. She has given me plenty of advice, helping me to concentrate."

"I think the meetings are helping me to be more aware of things that are needed to get a job. And I think that it is slowly building my confidence in things."

"I like the meetings because I can tell him my problems and he helps me with them. Plus he tells me about his work."

It's nice to know that someone takes a special interest in me and gives up their time to help me do well."

For further information, please contact your school mentoring co-ordinator.

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