



## Tips on gap fillers

Sometimes sessions with parents flow and the time goes by quickly. But some parents are not so easy to talk to and you may find awkward silences.

Plan your meeting carefully (use the Meeting Prep sheets) – have a clear list of what you want to discuss, and you could include ‘extra’ things to mention if time.

### Here are some gap fillers to help you:

1. Please do ask me/us if you have any questions or concerns of your own.
2. Please feel free to tell us if anything changes at home which might affect (name of child)..... Sometimes a relative dies or is in hospital and even a young child can be affected by that, but parents don't always think to tell us in the nursery as it's a private matter. We respect your privacy but your child may be acting in a certain way because of the new situation.
3. I'm looking in my notebook and I see that earlier in the session you said..... Can you tell me more about that concern we spoke briefly about earlier?
4. I showed you one or two samples of ....'s work, can I show you some more?
5. I'd like to share with you some resources which you could help him/her with at home
6. Have you seen some of the books we read with your child? Can I show you his favourites?
7. Can I show you some games, toys, equipment that we use in the classroom
8. Avoid personal stories from your own life
9. DO... tell stories about the child! What you have seen or observed at gan! Parents love these extras!

### Tips how to conclude the session with parents

Always keep an eye on the time. It's OK to finish a meeting with parents early as sometimes you've completed all the business before the half hour. As long as you've covered everything you intended to cover and as long as parents feel they've been listened to, there's no reason to hang on to fill in the time.

However some parents talk a lot, and sometimes there's a lot to say about a child.

### If you're still talking about relevant information when it's time to end , say something like:

This has been a really useful conversation. But we've now run out of time although there's still more for us to discuss. Please do make an appointment for us to continue with this conversation. I think it's very important.

### **Otherwise here are some suggested endings:**

We've covered some really important topics concerning ...(name of child.) I hope you found it useful. You've definitely given me some food for thought about him/her. (Makes the parents feel they contributed and weren't just passive).

- I'll certainly follow up on your point about.....
- Thanks so much for coming - I really appreciate it.
- End by standing up, smiling, and shaking hands and showing them to the door.

### **Tips on Saying difficult things to say to parents:**

1. When they're going off on irrelevant tangents: You can say "Please (use their name). Can we stick to the main topic here as we still have plenty to discuss?"
2. When they're blaming: You can say "I don't find it very helpful to blame..... We need to resolve the problem not just blame someone".
3. When they're being rude: You can say "Let's be polite....Can we go over the facts".
4. When they're being dismissive: You can say "I'm taking this issue very seriously. Nothing will get resolved unless we take this seriously. It's important to us"
5. You may say "I don't know the answer to that one but I'll get back to you as soon as I've checked it out."
6. In the same way as we deal with children; occasionally we have to say a very definite "No". Don't be afraid of this. You are not going to meet all the needs of all the parents all of the time!

**Smile and be friendly (firm is also OK).**