

Getting the most out of parents' evenings

Parents' evenings are a chance to sit face-to-face (virtually) with your child's teachers. We are continuing with the remote model which is a legacy of Covid restrictions because this allows for a focused (without distraction and background noise) conversation and a guaranteed time slot of 6 minutes per subject.

We currently favour this model also because it removes travel time for busy parents, keeps the time for the evening more focused than was the case in the past and can be scheduled in around work and other commitments, thus increasing participation from parents which we welcome.

The link to curriculum choices

There will be lots of information available about the subjects available for curriculum choices provided separately to the parents' evening. We are suggesting some questions below which you can ask teachers. If you have a specific question relating to curriculum choices, you can of course ask this, but not at the expense of an opportunity to get an overview of your child's progress.

What do we mean by progress?

By progress, we mean learning the curriculum. The curriculum in terms of lessons is the knowledge and skills that we plan to teach children and our assessments are used to inform ourselves, the students and parents about how well what we are teaching is being learnt. If a student is showing evidence that they know more and remember more and can do more in a subject, then they are making progress.

Why do parents' evenings matter?

During the allotted time, you get to glean as much information about your child's progress in each subject as is humanly possible. To make sure parents' evenings are as useful as they're meant to be, take some time to plan carefully what you really want to know.

Who's invited?

The student themselves can be invited along to parents' evenings. It's up to your family whether you have them there, but there can be great value in involving a secondary school student in discussions about their education – promoting a sense of ownership and emphasising the young person's role in working with teachers and parents/carers towards success.

Surprises

Parents' evenings are strictly for an update on progress (i.e. how well the child is learning the curriculum based upon their effort, conduct, independent learning as well as what their potential is). If you become aware of an issue, don't wait for parents' evening to roll around - contact the school as soon as possible. By the same token, the school should let you know of any problems and work with you to deal with them as they arise.

Some possible questions

- Is my child's progress through the curriculum in line with the teacher's expectations?
- Have they done anything particularly well, or not so well?
- What can they do to improve?
- How can I help as a parent?
- How much time should my child's homework for this subject take?
- What does assessment tell us about possible performance in future exams?
- Do they contribute in lessons?

Make a note on the night of the teachers' answers - after a couple of hours moving from one subject to another, it can be easy to forget or muddle the comments.

