

Parents' Consultations FAQs – February 2021 – v1

Q: Should schools be carrying out parents' evening at this time?

A: It is recommended that schools give careful consideration on whether parents' consultations are essential during this time. Parents are entitled to reports on their children's progress and, therefore, it may be that schools do need to carry out parents' consultations at this time. However, schools could consider if there are alternative ways that they can provide this information.

Q: What should happen if we feel we cannot postpone and need to carry parents' consultations out whilst schools are only partially open – is there anything we need to consider?

A: For the foreseeable future, any parents' consultations will need to be carried out remotely. If remote parents' consultations are currently taking place, it remains important that schools consider how teachers will be expected to engage remotely with the parents of individual children.

Schools could consider how they can remotely implement the good practice in face-to-face parents' consultations. To ensure that no teacher is expected to meet with parents alone, consideration could be given to ascertain if it is viable to have at least one other member of staff join a meeting or phone conference with parents. This could be done either by joining the conference remotely or by joining the call from the same physical location as the member of staff. In the latter case, the members of staff would likely need to be located on the school site and would need to adhere to social distancing and other COVID-control measures in place at this time. Schools may also wish to explore other remote monitoring options such as using breakout rooms, which would allow members of SLT to be 'on-call' during consultations.

In any virtual consultation, teachers should not be expected to make use of their own equipment to conduct such conferences. This may mean that such sessions can only be held while teachers are on site rather than working at home, if they do not have access to school equipment while working off site.

Schools could consider:

- Whether a workload audit would be helpful to ensure that, they do not result in additional burdens for teachers and school leaders.
- Timetabling to ensure that teachers are given adequate breaks during remote parents' consultation sessions.

Q: What information should we consider sharing with our parents prior to these sessions?

A: Good communication with parents will ensure that any planned events can be carried out effectively. Schools may wish to consider producing a brief information document including protocols around:

- An expectation that video calls will not be recorded/screen shot
- Appropriate locations for parents to be during any video calls
- How different households will be able to attend simultaneously

- Whether or not there is an expectation that the calls are audio only, audio and video, and whether there is a choice. Where there is a choice, the choice should be available to both parents and teachers. The appropriateness of options such as appropriate screen backgrounds or background blurring facilities should be considered
- Whether or not children are expected/allowed to attend
- The expectations on the length of time that will be allocated to each meeting and how they will start and end, particularly if a video appointment system is being used that will cut the call automatically after a certain length of time
- The alternative plans that are in place should a video appointment system fail or if connectivity is lost. Consider how to make contingency plans that would not create an additional burden for individual teachers
- What will happen in the unlikely event that a parent is verbally abusive during a consultation
- What will happen if the person who attends the consultation is not who the teacher was expecting
- Any accessibility information and practical tips that will ensure that parents are able to access video calls effectively (e.g. suitable browsers, functionality limitations on some devices, keeping microphones on mute when not contributing).

Q: What training should we offer our staff prior to remote parents' consultations?

A: It is important that staff be given adequate training to manage remote calls effectively. When using a video conferencing system staff should be provided with additional training to ensure compliance with GDPR, particularly when sharing screens.

Staff could also be given guidance around how to seek assurances that the person in the consultation is the parent or carer of the child.