

Dear Parents and Carers,

You may recall that we recently asked for your feedback and views about our introduction of Edulink One and our approach to Parents' Evening events this year. Thank you for all the responses that we received and also for taking the time to provide very useful feedback. In total, there were 281 responses, the overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that they had activated their Edulink One parent / carer account and they found it easy to activate, use and navigate the platform. A small number of parents and carers had not activated their accounts for a number of reasons. A reminder has been sent out to all parents and carers to ensure that accounts are activated as we intend to move to using Edulink One as our primary means of communication instead of Parent Mail. This will happen by September 2022.

Edulink One: Homework Parental views and feedback

Overall, the majority of parents indicated that the Edulink One homework module is a useful addition (rating it 3.83 / 5 stars). We asked parents and carers how we could improve the use of the homework module. The main responses were:

- 1) Ensure that all teachers use it to set homework regularly.
- 2) Use the 'received' function so that it is clear homework has been submitted.
- 3) Display scores and marks for pieces of homework.
- 4) Alert pupils (and parents / carers) when new pieces of homework are added.

We will continue to remind teachers about using Edulink One to set homework and where necessary, additional staff training will be provided. The 'received' function does appear to cause some confusion and we are in discussion with Overnet Data (the creators of Edulink) about how this can be made more user friendly. You may be interested to know that other schools using this platform have raised similar concerns. At present, it is not possible for the platform to display marks or grades for individual pieces of homework or issue alerts when new pieces of homework have been set. These suggestions have been forwarded to the team of developers at Overnet Data who are keen to explore ways in which the platform which is relatively new can be enhanced.

It is worth noting that those pupils who are using the homework module most effectively are ticking the 'complete' button after each piece of homework has been completed. This helps them to organise and manage their homework 'workload'. It is also possible for all users including parents to use the filters at the top of the *current* homework task list (see below). Pupils in particular may find it useful to filter their homework by the **due date**.

Due Date	Name	Subject & Class	Set
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The homework module has proved to be very useful for teachers to share resources (in electronic format) with pupils such as worksheets in case paper copies distributed in school are misplaced, sound files, links to web sites and various other documents.

Parents Evenings:

This year, due to the ongoing disruption of the pandemic, we have adopted a blended approach to parents' evenings with some taking place 'in-person' on site (these were for Year 12 and Year 13 in October / November) and virtual events using Edulink One for all other year groups. 84 respondents to the survey had attended an in-person event at school and 198 attended a virtual event. Some parents with pupils and students in different year groups had the opportunity to experience both approaches.

For the in-person events, the **organisation of the event** achieved a rating of 4.4/5 stars. With significant planning and preparation we were able to adopt a new approach to parents' evenings onsite with teachers based in classrooms across the school site. This avoided large numbers of people having to be in the hall at the same time which in previous years has sometimes proved to be difficult (e.g. not being able to hear the member of staff, lack of privacy etc.). The overall rating for **feedback and teacher comments** was 4.5/5 and the Covid-19 safety measures implemented was rated 4.6/5 (where we asked people to tell us 'how safe they felt during the event').

For the virtual events delivered using Edulink One (and a video conferencing platform provided by a third party called 'Twilio') the rating for **booking appointments** was 4.5/5 stars. Just under half of respondents had watched the

video guide provided to all parents and carers with the initial information about the events. **Feedback and teacher comments** received a rating of 4.3/5 with the main areas of feedback from parents and carers being related to time limits and teachers running out of time. At present, there is no option within the platform to have different time allocations for different subjects, e.g. longer appointments with core subjects. Again, this has been feedback to the developers. 30% of parents and carers who had attended a virtual event experienced technical problems and unfortunately, 30 parents and carers who experienced technical issues were unable to resolve them during the event. Technical problems tended to arise if the attendee was accessing the event on a smart phone or particular web browsers or if the user had unreliable broadband connection. We understand the frustration that this has caused and if a parent or carer experienced difficulties resulting in them not being able to attend virtually, we were able to provide opportunities after the event for them to receive detailed feedback and advice from their child's subject teachers. Overnet Data have been made aware of these issues and have since published a helpful guide for parents and carers which we will publish should we need to use virtual events in the future.

We asked all respondents to the survey their views on the future of Parents' Evenings and other events (e.g. Open Evenings / Information Evenings) at NTS. 46% indicated that their preference would be for 'in-person' events, onsite at school, 32% preferred virtual events citing reasons such as 'efficiency', 'not having to travel' and 'a step forward'. 19% indicated that they had no preference. The overall feeling is that 'in-person' events do feel more personal, less rushed and also provide that much needed and important face-to-face contact with your child's subject teachers and the opportunity to discuss any concerns with senior members of staff. Edulink One is certainly a useful additional tool particularly given that if needed, we can use it for virtual events in the future.

You might find it interesting to read a selection of some of the 'additional comments' that parents and carers shared with us via the survey.

Parent / Carer Additional Comments:

It's a good tool and the addition of parents evening onto it was a step forward.

I found the virtual evening for both year groups so much more efficient and would much prefer this option going forward. There wasn't the issues of distractions, other parents hearing about your child, appointments not running to time or someone else using your slot. The 4 minute slot was on the whole an ideal amount of time, a few finished earlier and we were able to disconnect. There will always be the odd one where more time would be better, however if there was significant issues to be discussed I'm assuming we would be contacted, or be able to contact school to discuss issues further. I cannot fault this means at all.

I am glad this questionnaire has been circulated as I did want to comment on how well run this event was. Although I would prefer face to face discussions with teachers the EduLink platform used was excellent. Instructions were easy to follow, it worked for both parties, very efficient format and so much better than the option of not being able to have a parents evening. Well done NTS team!

Virtual evening was brilliant and convenient but also it would be nice to actually meet some teachers as well.

Perhaps a mixture of these? The virtual ones were great in terms of time, no travelling and all done very quickly and efficiently. No parents pushing in or talking beyond their time. The only thing I would ask about virtual ones would be a little more time in each slot even a min or two extra?

Worked a treat, but I recommend to others use a desktop, not phone.

Thought it was really well organised and liked the privacy of virtual thinking it's the way forward

Obviously the ability to view homework in lower years is very useful. However my answers reflect that my child is very conscientious, so I don't feel the need to check up on him.

If the app developers could add a 'remember my information' option on the log in page that would help speed up the login process (this request has been forwarded to the development team).

I think Edulink works brilliantly especially as it lets me keep up to date with homework that's been set.

I think the NTS have been brilliant throughout the last 2 years and I would like to thank all the staff who have worked so hard.

Both types of Parents' Evenings were well organised, well done for both.

I appreciated having longer, face to face, to talk to teachers for my child in Year 11 child as this is such an important year.

I like EduLink, I would like to be able to see detentions on there as well as absences. I don't think that information is on there currently? Also a general comment around virtual parents evening. I thought this worked really well, however my main comment would be the length of time allocated per teacher, 4 minutes is NOT enough time to properly discuss my child's performance. Particularly as this was an options year for my child. I would happily do virtual parents evening again but we need more time of future, My experience is you would get more than 4 minutes with a face to face event. Thank you. (NTS response to the reference to detentions and absences: We are investigating the possibility of using the 'behaviour module' which would allow parents and carers to see detentions. Parents and carers can already see absence / attendance information in real time using the 'attendance' module which is linked to our live registration system).

I think that Edulink is fantastic, keeps me up to date with all the girls are expected to do at school. I do feel frustrated that I couldn't get on to the girls' Parents' Evening, I really wanted to discuss certain areas with the girls' teachers, which has since been rectified via phone call. (NTS response: We are very sorry that you experienced technical difficulties for the virtual Parents' Evening. We have fed the concerns regarding technical issues back to the developers)

Virtual parents evening was so slick. I love the allotted timescales as it made me prepare and get through the conversation constructively. Plus didn't have the "chaos" of other parents jumping in or overrunning their allotted time. The booking system was amazing and cut my attendance time so much. Much prefer virtual. Good job!

Found the virtual appointments very useful. Only downside is that you don't get to see the school itself.

Both are easy to access and use. I would say however that accessing PE appointments can be 'pressured'. I was aware that I had to get on early to get appointments (we both work from 9am on Monday) and so I was worried I was not going to be able to speak to some teachers if they got booked up. Perhaps the appointments could open on a Friday evening or weekend to help working parents (although I understand that folks work at weekends also). Edulink is helpful to keep an eye on my Year 7 pupil, perhaps somewhere for parents to 'sign' would be helpful and then the planners wouldn't be needed. I admit that I forget to sign the planners now Edulink is up and running. (NTS response: we are currently reviewing the use of planners and looking at potential alternatives moving forward. At present, there is no function within Edulink that allows parents to 'sign' to indicate they have checked that their child has completed their homework each week but is a good suggestion which will be passed on to the development team).

I think EduLink is a useful tool for parents. I recently used it to access a copy of my child's latest report which was very helpful.

Thank you once again for taking the time to complete the survey and for all your comments and feedback.

Kind regards,

Mr A. Walker

Deputy Headteacher (Teaching and Learning)