



Schools have always recognised the need for effective communication and collaboration with parents/guardians and, since March 2020, they have been very creative and adaptable in facilitating this. In the 2020/21 academic year schools will work in partnership with parents/guardians to provide alternative means of conducting parent-teacher meetings, and meetings with parents of students with special educational needs (SEN). Schools may also need to adapt their usual methods for open days. The guidance below provides options to support schools in adapting their approaches in the current school year.

Parent-teacher meetings

Parent-teacher meetings facilitate individualised two-way communication about a student's development and progression in their learning, and their wellbeing. Regular reports provided to parents/guardians/students are an important part of this communication. Given the exceptional circumstances of this school year, parent-teacher engagements should be arranged in line with public health advice which recommends reducing social contacts. In this context, the following interim options could be used to ensure that ongoing communication is provided to parents/guardians of post-primary students during COVID-19. Consultation will take place at school level in relation to the option(s) most appropriate for enabling engagement with parents/guardians and students.



Additional reports

Additional short progress report(s) could be provided to parents/guardians/students through the school's usual method, whether online or in hard copy. Parents/guardians would have the option to have a follow-up conversation with a teacher should one be required.



Phone Call

Parent-teacher meetings can be conducted by phone at a mutually convenient time for the teacher and parent/guardian/student.



Video-conferencing

Video-conferencing facilities can be used in place of face-to-face meetings where available, and where parents/guardians and teachers have appropriate digital access.

It is recognised that post-primary teachers teach multiple class groups. The time of feedback meetings should align with the normal timeframes for parent-teacher meetings as outlined in the relevant Department circulars. The schedule of teacher-parent contact times should be arranged by the school. Schools should advise parents/guardians/students as soon as feasible as to the arrangements in place for this year.

Open days

Instead of inviting parents/guardians and prospective students into the school building, the following options could be used to give parents and current and prospective students an insight into school life:



Short videos celebrating the work of the school



Information booklets outlining various aspects of school life



The school website to showcase the work of the school