

S1 Parents Evening – Wed 3rd February 2021

School Cloud: Parents' Evening System



Dear Parent/Carer,

Due to current restrictions with access to schools, it is not possible to have parents' evenings in the usual way. Therefore, after exploring several options, we have decided to hold virtual parents' meetings using the Parents' Evening System from a company called School Cloud. This system has been used successfully in other schools in the authority as a means of booking appointments for parents' evening appointments in previous years. However, it also offers a viable solution through video conferencing to allow one-to-one meetings to take place between parents/carers and staff.

We have trialled this system and while staff and parents both found it easy to use, we are aware that there may be connectivity issues with it, so please bear with us.

As per the reporting calendar, the scheduled **S1 Parents' Evening** will take place on **Wednesday 3rd February, 3.30-6.00pm**. In order to book appointments for this evening, I would ask you to visit the website (braes.schoolcloud.co.uk) which will take you to the parents' login page and allow you to book appointments with your child's teachers.

The booking system will open from Wednesday 20th January and will close on Sunday 31st January 2021, and I would suggest booking early to get the slots that suit you and, if possible, try to leave a break between your appointments.

The following information hopefully covers most of the questions you may have around accessing and using the system, booking appointments and joining the virtual evening, but if you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact me, marjorie.cotter@falkirk.gov.uk.

What equipment do I need to access the virtual parents' evening?

In order to join the virtual appointments you will need:

- a device with a microphone and speaker
- access to the internet
- a compatible web browser as follows:
 - iPhone/iPad: Safari
 - Android: Chrome or Firefox
 - Windows: Chrome, Firefox or Microsoft Edge
 - Mac: Safari, Chrome or Firefox
 - Linux: Chrome or Firefox
- It is recommended that you use the browsers above rather than Internet Explorer
- It is recommended to use a smartphone for video appointments. However, if you do not have a smartphone with a front facing camera, a laptop or computer with a webcam will allow you to connect.

Do I need to install an app to join the virtual parents' evening?

No, there is no need to install any apps on your device. The only way to access the website is through a normal web browser – see recommended list of browsers above.

How do I book appointments?

Browse to <https://braes.schoolcloud.co.uk/>

Step 1: Login

Fill out the details on the page then click the *Log In* button.

A confirmation of your appointments will be sent to the email address you provide.

Step 2: Select Parents' Evening

Click on the date you wish to book.

Unable to make all of the dates listed? Click *I'm unable to attend*.

Step 3: Select Booking Mode

Choose *Automatic* if you'd like the system to suggest the shortest possible appointment schedule based on the times you're available to attend. To pick the times to book with each teacher, choose *Manual*. Then press *Next*.

We recommend choosing the automatic booking mode when browsing on a mobile device.

Step 4: Choose Teachers

If you chose the automatic booking mode, drag the sliders at the top of the screen to indicate the earliest and latest you can attend.

Select the teachers you'd like to book appointments with. A green tick indicates they're selected. To de-select, click on their name.

Step 5b (Manual): Book Appointments

Click any of the green cells to make an appointment. Blue cells signify where you already have an appointment. Grey cells are unavailable.

To change an appointment, delete the original by hovering over the blue box and clicking *Delete*. Then choose an alternate time.

Once you're finished booking all appointments, at the top of the page in the alert box, press *click here* to finish the booking process.

Step 6: Finished

All your bookings now appear on the My Bookings page. An email confirmation has been sent and you can also print appointments by pressing *Print*. Click *Subscribe to Calendar* to add these and any future bookings to your calendar.

To change your appointments, click on *Amend Bookings*.

How do I attend my appointments via video call on the Parents' Evening?

You can access your appointments by following the steps below:

Step 1 – Log in and click on the Parents' Evening (the one you want to join)

On the day of the video appointments, login to the website. Once logged in you will see a notice that you have upcoming video appointments and under this the details of the event, along with a *Join Video Appointments* button. This will become available 60 minutes before your first appointment.

Step 2 – The Video Call Screen

When you click *Join Video Appointments* the video call screen will be displayed. You may at this point be asked if you wish to allow access to your camera/microphone, in which case please click yes. On this screen you can see the following:

- At the top left the teacher name (and subject details) for the current and next appointment.
- At the top right a countdown to the start of the appointment.
- At the bottom the controls for the microphone and camera (once a teacher is available or you are in a call these also show a pick up and hang up button).
- In the middle, when your appointment is due to start, the *Start Appointment* button.

Step 3 – Making a Call

Click the *Start Appointment* button. You will see yourself in the bottom right corner of the screen (unless you have no camera, or have chosen to turn it off). If the teacher has not yet joined you will see a notice to that effect in the centre of the screen. When a teacher joins a call you will see them in the main part of the screen - or hear them, if they have no camera (or have turned it off) - and can start your discussion with them. You will also see the remaining time for the appointment counting down in the blue bar at the top of the screen.

What happens if I lose access to the system?

If you lose access to the system for some reason during the call, log in again and click *Start Appointment* on the video call screen. As long as the teacher is still in the call this will let you continue with the appointment (this is the same for the teacher if they lose their access). When the countdown in the blue bar stops the appointment time is over and the call will automatically end.

How will I know which appointments I should attend?

You need to book your appointments in advance of the parents' evening taking place. When you log into the website you will see your list of appointments and a countdown timer to show how long each appointment lasts and when your next appointment is due to take place.

Will I automatically join the next teacher for my next appointment?

No, if you have a consecutive appointments scheduled then once the video call ends with the first teacher your screen will display a *Start Next Appointment* button. When you are ready to start the appointment, click on it. If you do not have a consecutive appointment, then you will see a new countdown timer telling you how long until the start of your next appointment.

Will I automatically be connected to the teachers I have an appointment with?

Both the parent and teacher must be logged into the site and indicate that they are ready to start the appointment before the video conferencing will connect.

What happens when I have finished all my appointments?

Once your final appointment for the evening is complete you will see a message advising you of this.

What happens if I join the appointment later than my scheduled start time?

If you (or the teacher) are late, or leave and re-join the call, it does **not** reset the timer. If you delay starting a call it does **not** extend the duration for that appointment. The appointment will always end at the scheduled time.

What will happen as I approach the end of my appointment?

For the last minute of your appointment, the timer will turn from blue to amber. This indicates that you now have limited time left and you should ask any final questions before the call ends at the scheduled end time.

Can I request a longer appointment time?

No, your appointments will be booked in advance of the parents' evening and will last up to 5 minutes. If, for any reason, you require more information then you should contact your child's Pupil Support teacher.

What happens if I miss an appointment?

If you miss an appointment there is no way to join the appointment.

Are there optimum conditions for the video conferencing to be a success?

The system can pick up on background noise so it is advisable to have a quiet space to take the video call where there is limited background noise. It would be useful to turn off other devices in the same room, e.g. the TV, a radio etc.

When booking my appointments, should I try to leave a 5 minute gap between appointments?

It is advisable to leave a 5 minute gap between your appointments. If you do this, you are less likely to start your appointment late which means that you will get your full allocated time with each teacher.

Do I have to be at home to join the parents' evening?

No, you can access the website using any device and therefore you can choose to access the parents' evening from any location where you have suitable wifi to connect to the system.

Can two parents log into the call from different devices?

The parents' evening system only allows one device to connect to the appointment with the teacher. However, the company are currently developing this feature and it may be available later in the school year.

Is this system used in other schools?

The parents' evening system has been used for over 40 million hours of video conferencing between teachers and parents across the whole of the UK. In addition, all secondary schools in Falkirk Council are using video conferencing software for parents' evenings this year.

Are the video calls secure?

Yes, all video calls are encrypted between teachers and parents.

What should I do if I do not have a smartphone or access to the internet at home?

If you do not have access to a smartphone or you do not have internet access then you should contact your child's Pupil Support teacher to discuss how we can ensure that you are able to virtually attend our parents' evening.

Kind regards,
Marjorie Cotter
Depute Head Teacher