

Open Evening Questions and Answers

Dear Parents, these questions were raised at our recent virtual Open Evening on 24th September. We hope you find the summary of Mr McClarey's answers helpful

1. Do you have to be a Catholic to attend Blessed Edward's?

In short no you do not have to be a Catholic to attend our college. We are an inclusive community which welcomes young people of all faiths and those with none. Our student population is 50% Catholic and we take students from around 22 different primary schools each year. The admissions form from the local authority asks you to enter three choices. If you want your child to come to us, you must put Blessed Edward's as first choice.

2. Does my child have to have a laptop?

The ability to access work online is now an important feature of learning. Here at Blessed Edward's we operate a laptop leasing scheme which enables parents to purchase a laptop and spread the cost out over two to three years. We would urge parents to contact us if they have any issues with their child being able to access the Internet or their ability to complete work online. We currently use Google classrooms as one of our main approaches to the setting and handing in of homework.

3. My child is bright, will he be stretched?

Teachers ensure that they "teach to the top" in their lessons while supporting students of all abilities. Our experienced teachers use data to quickly and accurately identify who the highest performers are in each subject. These students are then challenged appropriately. There are three assessment points in the year along with three reports home to parents. There are also two parents evenings in year 7 at which you can discuss your child's progress. Teachers ensure that the feedback they give both verbally and in writing challenges students and addresses misconceptions. Bridging work is set each summer based on the work that your child will cover in the first half term of their next academic year. This enables them to hit the ground running in September.

4. What is your behaviour policy?

Restorative justice underpins our approach to dealing with any issues that arise in school. There are over 1000 young people in our college and inevitably arguments happen however we are a "peaceful" school. What we mean by "peaceful" is that we have the structures and the people in place to resolve issues as and when they arise. Our exclusion rate is the lowest in the city because of the extensive and proactive work we do in this area. Our students feel safe and valued at school.

5. Why should I choose your school?

Our unique selling point is that we educate the whole child. We educate their mind their body and their soul. We work in partnership with parents to ensure that our students are happy, safe and achieve well at school. We seek to grow our young people as people of good character and we believe that in today's world this has never been more important.

6. How do you arrange children into classes?

We use a wide variety of data to place our students into classes. However in the first term students will be in mixed ability groups which allows them to settle and get used to their new environment here at Blessed Edward's. We use data from primary school, our own cognitive ability tests and homework and assessment records from your child's first term to reset after Christmas. Students are then either placed in one of two upper sets or six mixed ability sets depending on their performance during the first term. We find this approach enables our students to show us what they are truly capable of and not be pigeonholed from day one into any particular set.

7. Do you put on extra-curricular trips?

We run an extensive and wide range of extracurricular trips including pilgrimages to Lourdes and Rome, cultural exchanges to Spain, France and Germany along with an annual ski trip. We also run a sports tour which this year went to Barbados and we are hoping to send a group of students on an expedition to Tanzania in the summer of 2021

8. Do you have a library?

Yes we are very proud of our library here at Blessed Edward's and we have a full time librarian who works closely with teachers in the college to ensure that students have access to a wide range of books. We ask that all students bring a reading book to school each day. In the summer between year six and year 7 we give our new students a book to read. Their English homeworks are then based on this book for the first half term.

9. What will the year sevens first day look like?

This year we had a very successful year seven induction day in September. We brought year seven students in for a whole day before welcoming other students back into the college. It is highly likely we will do the same again in September 2021. We are also hoping to have our usual induction programme in place in the summer term and I would urge you to look at the transition calendar on our college website for further details.

10. My child has a sibling at the college will she get a place?

Please check our admissions policy for any query about admissions. If your child currently has a brother or sister at the college they will be criteria 5. If they have had a brother or sister at the college who has now left they will be criteria 6. We can never make guarantees about admissions but this puts you in a strong position.

11. Where can I find out information about admissions?

Please see the admission section of our college website which has all the relevant policies and links to the local authority application forms. Please note that the closing date for applications is the 31st of October. Please refer to the admissions criteria contained in our admissions policy when making your application. There is also a supplementary information form which must be returned directly to the college by the 31st of October

12. How much homework will my child get each night?

We ask teachers in year 7 to give your child one piece of homework per subject per week. On average this works out at around one hour per night during the school week. We would always recommend doing some additional work at the weekend if possible. We find that

successful students will often read around their subjects and do what we call nonrequired work. Your child will notice an increase compared to primary school.

13. How does transport to school work?

Transport to the college is run by First Bus and the details of routes and stops can be found on their website as well as the college website in the transition section. The S1 and S2 double decker buses travel to and from Droitwich each day with one of them picking up in Fern Hill Heath. The S3 and S4 double deckers travel to and from Warndon Villages and the surrounding areas each day. The S5 double Decker bring students in from Pershore and the S27 takes students to and from the Crowngate bus station. All of these bus services drop off and pick up from the college site. The 32 and 37 bus services also bring students to the college from the Northwick area of the city.

14. What is the ethos of your college?

The college mission statement is “For the greater glory of God” and this underpins the work that all staff and students do on a daily basis. Through our virtues we all aim to grow as people of good character who can go out and play their part in making the world a better place. Our college rules are also three of our college virtues, namely Respect, Kindness and Honesty.

15. What options will my child be able to study at GCSE?

At Blessed Edwards your child will be able to study a wide range of subjects. Unlike many schools they will have an open choice of three to four GCSE options. There are no directed pathways here at Blessed Edward’s. Students will study a core of Maths, English, RE, Science and PE alongside their option choices. We do not play League table games here at Blessed Edward’s but make sure that we offer a broad range of subjects which are of value to students. Students have the option to study Triple Science taught by subject specialists and also have a choice of three languages. We also offer Fine Art, Graphics and Photography at GCSE whereas most schools simply offer a general Art GCSE.

16. Will my child be in the same class as his friends?

As part of our transition programme we work closely with year six teachers and meet with them during the summer term. Our head of year 7 visits all our feeder primary schools and picks up all the relevant information about our students. We ask our feeder primary schools to put their children into groups of four. We then use these groups to form our tutor groups so that each day your child will always be with some of their friends from primary school. Not all schools will go to these lengths to make sure your child feels settled at their new secondary school

17. How do you look after the wellbeing of students?

The starting point for looking after the wellbeing of our students is to provide a calm and purposeful learning environment. We also have a skilled and committed pastoral support team consisting of heads of year, counsellors and learning mentors. Each child has their own form tutor who is a key person in terms of supporting the wellbeing of your child. We believe our pastoral care is second to none.

18. What is your curriculum offer in Year 7?

The college has a three year key stage 3 and we believe this is in the best interests of our students. It gives them a coherent and well thought out experience of a broad range of subjects. Students have lessons for 25 hours each week, with each day being divided into 5 one hour lessons. Over the course of a week they have three hours of RE, English, maths, Science, Languages and Humanities along with two hours of Design and Technology , two hours of PE and then one hour of Art , Music and Computing. Please do have a look at the curriculum section of our website for further details.

19. What sports facilities do you have?

As Mr McClarey said in his speech we are the most successful sporting school in the city. We have excellent facilities including a sports Hall , astro , multi gym , dance and drama studio , cricket pavilion and extensive playing fields. There are many lunchtime and after school clubs and the challenge for your child will be in deciding what to do and then how to fit it all in.

20. How does the canteen work?

The College operates a cashless system with parents loading money onto their child's account via the Parent Pay website. We take a biometric scan of your Childs thumb print which your child can then use to purchase food before school, at break time and lunchtime. Unlike primary school there is no need to pre order meals however you can view what your child has purchased on the Parent Pay website . Meals are served in our college canteen and also at our outdoor servery in the year 7 playground.

21. Faith is important to our family how will you support this?

Each morning there is a collective act of worship led by your child's form tutor which is fully participated in by all students. There is a weekly assembly led by a member of the senior leadership team as well as class and whole college masses. The college follows the churches liturgical calendar. We have our own Chapel as well as a college chaplain and we are classed as an outstanding Catholic school

22. What are your exam results like?

The college consistently gets outstanding academic results with strong performance over a long period of time. We value the achievements of all students and recognise that for some students, grade eights and nines mean success whereas for others grades four and five will represent success. Many of our students go on to succeed at A' level and University because of the foundations laid here at Blessed Edward's. Our teachers are experienced and skilled in getting the very best out of each individual.

23. How can I find out about learning support?

Please look at the SEN section of the college website for information such as our SEN policy and our local offer. We work closely with primary schools to obtain all the relevant information on your child in order to make their transition to secondary school a seamless one. If your child has SEN we will give them the opportunity to visit the college and become familiar with the surroundings and the people. We are proud to say that we are an inclusive school. We have students with a wide range of needs including students with physical disability and visual impairment. The college uses a range of intervention strategies to ensure students achieve in line with their peers and teachers are skilled in making

adjustments to ensure lessons are accessible to all . If you have any questions about SEN please contact Mrs Fitzer our college SENCo on mmf10@blessededward.co.uk

24. Do your students respond positively to the restorative justice programme?

Very much so. We have found that it has had a major impact on the quality of relationships within the college. Students recognise that they will be listened to and supported through any difficulties that they have

25. Who can I contact about admissions?

Please contact our admissions officer Natasha Burney on nburney@blessededward.co.uk

26. What aspects of STEM does the college do well?

Our science and maths Departments are in the top 20% nationally in terms of GCSE results. We offer Design and Technology in years 7 to 9 and students get a mix of practical and theoretical work which gives them a real sense of the importance and relevance of the subject. Nationally there has been a drop off in the uptake of STEM subjects at GCSE. At Blessed Edward's this is not the case with many students choosing to continue their studies in Design and Technology.

27. Will my child be able to study Music?

We are very proud of our musical tradition here at Blessed Edward's. We have an outstanding junior and senior choir, college orchestra and each year group has its own soul band. Performing Arts evenings and our annual college production are among the highlights of the college year. Please have a look at the year 11 Soul band video on the open evening website. We also run a wide range of peripatetic music lessons in singing, drumming, guitar, violin etc. Music and the arts are the heartbeat of our college.

28. What are your class sizes?

Your child will be in a tutor group of 30 students. There are seven of these in year 7 giving a total of 210 students. However there are eight teaching groups, so in lessons there will be around 27 children in each class. In year 10 and 11 class sizes are smaller than this.

29. Can my child bring a phone to school?

Yes they can but it must be switched off and kept in their bag during the school day. We have a "gate to gate" policy here at Blessed Edwards which means that students can only use their phone once they are off the college site. An exception to this is if they need to access their bus ticket on the First Bus app. We ask that parents contact pupil reception during the school day rather than texting or ringing their child. We will relay any message from parents to their child immediately.

If you have any further question please do not hesitate to contact the college on office@blessededward.co.uk