

Receiving feedback



As we approach Upper 5 parents evening on Thursday 6th February it seemed a fitting opportunity to write a short piece around receiving feedback. Bill Gates once said that “we all need people who give us feedback. This is how we improve”. But this isn’t always true. Some people get high-quality feedback and yet don’t progress. Why is this the case?

The feedback process can be divided into three parts: Asking, Giving and Receiving. Some common mistakes people make when they ask for feedback include leaving it to the last minute, only asking ‘either or’ questions and not being fully present in the moment.

So how can pupils contribute to the process and learn to receive feedback better?

It is not a judgement – see it for what it is, which is advice on how to get a bit better. Once you start to see feedback on a task as a judgement on your self-identity, it can lead to rejecting the feedback and a fear of failure.

Distinguish between the message and the messenger – it is important to separate your feelings about who is giving you the feedback from the message that they are actually delivering. Focus on the point, not the teacher.

Check for understanding – the teacher giving you the feedback may think they have been very clear on what they have said. You may be pretty sure you have understood them. However, it is easy for misunderstanding and miscommunication to occur. Asking them one or two questions to check for understanding may take a minute longer but can save you much more time in the long run.

Focus on what you have learnt – feedback that doesn’t result in anything changing is as effective as not having received any feedback at all. Asking yourself ‘what would I do differently next time?’ is a great way to ensure you have learnt something.