

Dear Parents/Carers,

During these difficult days with the coronavirus pandemic, I have been looking at different ways in which we can support our parents and pupils, whether they are currently at school or at home. The following offers some great ideas and is, in part, taken from Children & young people's health advice & is a very useful resource in supporting children's understanding of COVID-19 & in developing coping mechanisms.

If you have any further worries surrounding this or any other concern regarding your child please do contact school & I will get back to you so we can discuss,  
Thank you, Mrs. Egerton

### How do I talk to my child about coronavirus?

**Whatever age your child, it is knowing they can come to you with any questions and worries that is very important. Always be honest with your child, this will help them trust you.**

- If you don't know an answer say so – agree that you will find out and tell them, or you could find out together.
- If the question feels hard, and you don't know what to say– tell your child that it is a good and important question and you are going to think about it and get back to them.

Be true to your word and go back to them with an answer as soon as you can.

**Some questions like 'Will Grandma die?' don't have an easy answer. It can be tempting to tell your child not to worry about that. But It is OK to say you can't say for sure. At the same time you can give them facts to reassure them;**

- 'Most people who get the virus are a bit poorly and then get better'.
- 'Because it is a bit more dangerous for older people - Grandma is staying home and sticking to the rules to keep herself well'.
- 'We are all washing our hands and staying home to keep people safe'.
- 'The doctors are working hard to get a cure really fast'.

**Talk to your children about the good things that are happening because of the virus too;**

- People helping each other more.
- All of the people who are working hard to look after all the people who are ill and need help.
- Being able to spend more time together as a family.

Even though very little children will not understand about a virus – they do notice change in their lives and they do notice when the people they love most are worried and stressed.

You may notice they are less settled, need more cuddles and may wake more at night. The best way to help them is to respond to these signs that they are feeling a bit wobbly. So more cuddles and reassurance will help you both.

**When everything is changing sticking to as many of your routines as you can helps babies/children feel safe and secure.**

- Keep to meal, bed and bath times as much as you can.
- Get dressed and start your day.
- Get outside for your daily exercise with your baby.
- Use relaxation techniques to try and manage your own anxieties.
- Talk to your Pre-schooler simply. They may bring the subject up, or there may be changes in their day that they notice; like not going to nursery, being asked to wash their hands more often. These are opportunities to find out what they know.
- Ask them what they know or why they have asked a question.
- Keep what you say short and only give the information they need right then.

*'We are washing our hands more because of tiny, germs called a virus – when we wash our hands well, the germs can't get passed around and make people poorly. 'Nursery has closed so we all stay home and the germs can't get passed around'* When you have explained something ask them what they think about that –it might bring up more questions or they might have heard enough for now. Small children often need to talk about the same thing over and over this is how they learn to understand things.

**Their behaviour might show you they are struggling with the changes. You can help by naming the feelings you can see in them;**

- 'I can see you are cross we can't visit Grandma – it is hard when you love her so much'. This can help them make sense of how they feel.
- Make a suggestion of something that might help 'Shall we draw a picture for/ring Grandma – I know she misses you too'.

**Make the changes that happen more fun for them if possible. You could;**

- Facetime / Skype or call grandparents, family or friends.
- Post pictures and cards to friends and family you cannot visit.
- Sing songs when washing hands (CBeebies has a good video [here](#)).

Remember - try and keep routines and boundaries in place as much as you can – this helps children feel secure when everything feels uncertain. As children grow they become very tuned in to the world around them.

You may be surprised by how much they have picked up from overheard conversations and the TV. Be mindful of what they are hearing – they may not fully understand what they hear and see and be worried.

Talk to your child about the virus. Pick a time when you are not rushed. Try and avoid the time before bedtime – because your child may have a lot of thoughts and questions afterwards.

**Ask your child what they know about the coronavirus and if there is anything they want to know more about. If they say no – tell them you will ask them again in a day or so, and let them know they can always ask you.**

- They may be worried about themselves and you can reassure them that scientists and doctors say children are most likely to feel like they have a bad

cold and cough if they get the virus. Most children and young people will feel better in a week or two.

- They may be worried about you getting ill – you can tell them that you are likely to get better too – and you can tell them who will look after them if you felt too poorly for a few days.
- They may be very worried about someone they love who might get very poorly because of the virus. You can agree that this is a worry and remind them of everything that is being done to make the risk as low as possible.

### **Focus on the things you, and they, can do to keep everyone safe.**

- Washing hands and staying home.
- Not getting close to people we don't live with.
- Staying away from older people and poorly people.

### **These are the ways we are keeping everyone safe.**

- Older children and teenagers may well have heard as much as you, if not more, about the coronavirus outbreak. They might feel scared and stressed by what they know. The information they have may not be true. Giving them your time and support as they try to make sense of the huge changes and the worries that the outbreak has brought is important.
- Check in with your child to see how they are coping. Make sure they know that you are around and available to talk. Your child may find it easier to talk when you are doing something together like cooking, or taking daily exercise together.
- Answer any questions they may have and agree to find out the answers together of anything you are not sure of.
- Encourage them to check any facts they get from social media or friends – there is a lot of untrue information about the virus. Look together. Talk about trying to have some time each day when you turn off all news and media. There is so much news out there it is exhausting and can increase anxiety.
- Be honest about the risks – but point out that the experts are confident that if we do as we are asked and follow the rules the emergency period will pass.
- They may be worried about loved ones – and it might be hard to reassure them- sometimes all we can do when our child shares a fear is tell them we are there to listen. It is hard when we can't take a worry away, but young people appreciate when we are honest with them.
- Your child may have worries about being off school, missing school work or exams and how this might affect them in the future. Reassure them that children around the world are facing the same challenges. Reassure them the government has said they will make sure no-one is disadvantaged by this.
- Help your child make a plan of how they can keep up with studies, so they don't worry about how they will manage when they go back to school.
- Your child is probably really missing their friends. Encourage them to keep in contact by phone, email and social media. There are lots of different video apps they could also try. They could write letters and send cards to each other.
- It is really important that you are firm that they must stick to the rules and not meet up with their friends – however much they want to. This is a vital boundary and you must help your child understand this.
- All parents want to do their best to support their children through the corona virus outbreak. For those parents whose children already face challenges of understanding and /or behaviour it can be hard to know how to do this.

- You know your child best and how much information to share. You are the expert on your child and are in the best place to decide what they need to know.
- For some children with additional needs one of the most challenging things may be changes in their routines. This is hard because some changes have had to be made to everyone's daily life.
- Do what you can to keep some things the same. Getting up, and going to bed and mealtimes. Try and get out each day for some fresh air and exercise.

Your child may want to talk about the virus a lot or not at all – be led by them. [\\*Click Here\\*](#) for more information.

**You may be missing the respite that your child going to nursery or school gave you.**

- If you live with another grown up try and build in some short periods where you can take a break, even if it just means you cook tea, watch TV or read a book in peace.
- If you live alone with your child this is going to be an extra hard time. Be kind to yourself, use relaxation techniques, and take any quiet moment you have to take care of yourself – a quiet cup of tea, or a bath – rather than trying to get all of the household chores done.

**If your child has a history of mental health challenges like depression, anxiety, eating disorders and self-harm, you may be especially concerned about how worries about the coronavirus will affect them.**

- Give your child the same opportunity to talk to you about how they are feeling, and any worries they might have. Let them know you are around at any time to support them.
- Ask them if they feel the current situation is affecting their mental health. Help them think about what has helped them before when they have been struggling with their wellbeing.
- Be watchful for changes in their behaviour that might mean they are struggling. You know your child well and should trust your instincts.

**It can feel like there is no help out there for other health conditions during the coronavirus outbreak. This is not true. Although how people are assessed and treated might have changed for now – support for mental health is still very much available. If you are worried you can;**

- Contact your GP.
- Contact any services your child is already accessing.
- Call Just One Number on 0300 300 0123 to talk to a health professional.
- There are charitable health help lines available too.

If you need to access emergency mental health care - call the out of hours service or 111. **Call 999 if you feel your child is at immediate risk of harm.**

**Who Can Help?** You can contact the Healthy Child Programme by calling Just One Number on **0300 300 0123** or texting **Parentline** on **07520631590**. Our opening hours are 8am-6pm Monday-Friday (excluding bank holidays) and 9am-1pm on Saturdays. This is a hard time for everyone and you can only do your best. If you are finding it difficult to cope you can call **Just One Number on 0300 300 0123** for advice and support from a health professional.