



# Weekly Family Bulletin

Monday 20th April 2020

[www.halfwaynurseryinfantschool.org](http://www.halfwaynurseryinfantschool.org)

**Caring, Sharing, Learning for Life.**

## Spring has sprung!

I know so many people out there are really thankful for the lovely weather we are having at the moment, and are also appreciating the beauty of spring each time they look out of their window or spend a little time in their outdoor space at home. I want to say a massive, 'Well done and thank you!' to our Gardening Club here as, even though you're all at home at the moment staying safe, the bulbs you planted back in February are blooming beautifully at school, and they really make me smile each day when I walk past them. I didn't want you to miss out after all your hard work planting these, so I took some photographs of the ones in flower at the moment for you all to enjoy :-). Thank you, Gardening Club! Mrs Bestall x



## Free School Meals/Voucher Scheme update

We have now registered all children eligible for national Free School Meals (FSM) for the 'voucher scheme'. Parents/carers of children who are eligible for Free School Meals, but who are not attending school to receive their free lunch (i.e. those who are being cared for at home during school closures), will receive a £15 food voucher per week per eligible child. The vouchers have been ordered for today and will be emailed to you directly (where you have given us an email address - we will post vouchers to parents who do not have internet access). However, due to the number of schools registering for this scheme, many have had problems trying to set this up with the company that is managing the voucher scheme on behalf of the government...so, please bear with us as we really are doing our best!

Until we are confident that parents/carers are receiving the vouchers, we will continue to offer daily 'grab bags' for FSM children that you can collect from school daily at 11:30 am. If your child is eligible for a free school meal and, therefore, a grab bag, please ring the office on 0114 2482360 each school day before 9:30am to order your child's 'lunch to go'! Please do not attend the school site if you are self-isolating due to symptoms in your household.

Please note - Any FSM children who are also eligible to attend school and are doing so during closure will continue to receive their free meal in school. They are, therefore, are not eligible for a voucher under the national scheme.

## Government updates

### 1. Education Secretary's update on school closures

Yesterday, Gavin Williamson, the Secretary of State for Education, said the government had set no date at present on which schools in England might re-open. He said, "*Of course, I want nothing more than to see schools back, get them back to normal, make sure the children are sat around, learning, and experiencing the joy of being at school. But I can't give you a date. Because before we do, we need to meet five tests.*" Mr Williamson said these tests include protecting the NHS's ability to cope, seeing the daily death rates come down, and having reliable data that shows the rate of infection is decreasing to manageable levels.

Therefore, Halfway Nursery Infant School will remain closed to most pupils until further notice. We will keep you updated.



## **Government Updates cont.**

### **2. New major package to support online learning**

To support schools to deliver remote education during ongoing school closure, the Government has announced that the 'Oak National Academy' is due to launch today. This brand new enterprise has been created by 40 teachers from some of the leading schools across England, backed by government grant funding. It will provide 180 video lessons each week, across a broad range of subjects from maths to art to languages, for every year group from Reception through to Year 10.

The Education Secretary has said that he hopes this support will take some of the pressure off both parents and schools by providing more materials for them to use.

Oak Academy joins a broad range of support and resources available for schools and parents. This includes a list of high quality resources recently published by the Government, as well as the existing tools and resources schools use to provide remote education. Many suppliers are making resources, both online and hard-copy, available to schools for free.

This week (Monday 20 April) the BBC is launching its own education package across TV and online, featuring celebrities and some of the best teachers – helping to keep children learning and supporting parents. As soon as we receive more information about this we will let you know.

This online learning support is alongside new guidance published yesterday (Sunday 19 April) for parents on how best to support their child's education and development, outlined for your information below.

**Please read the information from the update below, but I would like to stress at this point that we know many of you are trying to balance working from home with your childcare needs, and know how difficult this is. No one expects parents to take on the role of teachers so please approach this in a way that is manageable for you all and that enables you to manage everything else you also need to do at the moment. Our learning packs that we have been sending home are to try and support you by providing resources and ideas to keep your little learners engaged in learning and busy but, as we have said previously, developing a routine that works and is manageable for you too is very important. Please do not think you have to complete the entire pack! We really do care about your health and wellbeing too and this is the most important thing at the moment. Please remember that you are all doing an amazing job in really challenging circumstances, and we are here to support you with wellbeing and learning where we can.**

### **3. Government update below on 'Supporting your children's education during coronavirus (COVID-19)'**

#### **Advice for children of different ages**

Alongside any work your children receives from school, you can try using online educational resources covering various subjects and age groups. These have been recommended by teachers and school leaders.

Educational programmes to help children learn at home are available on the BBC.

It is important to have regular conversations about staying safe online, and to encourage children to speak to you if they come across something worrying online.

Advice for different ages overleaf...



## **Helping children aged 2 to 4 to learn at home during coronavirus (COVID-19)**

You can help your child to learn through the little things you do with them, for example:

- everyday conversations;
- make-believe play;
- games with numbers or letters;
- reading together;
- involving them in the things you are doing, such as household chores, and talking with them about it.

Find ideas for new things you can try at *Hungry Little Minds*.

You do not need to set separate times, or plan complicated activities dedicated to learning. These activities can be incorporated into everyday life and play.

You know your children best. Avoid forcing them into lengthy planned activities if they naturally respond better to a mix of shorter activities. This can stop them getting bored or frustrated and keep them active, interested and learning through things they enjoy.

### **Keeping a routine**

Do not worry about trying to keep to the full routine that your child had in nursery, or with their childcare provider. But children will feel more comfortable with a predictable routine, so try to make sure they:

- get up and go to bed at the same time each day;
- have regular meal times;
- turn off any electronic devices, including the TV, at least an hour before bedtime.

### **Keeping active**

Young children should be active for at least 3 hours a day in total. It is also good to get some fresh air every day. If you do not have a garden and are taking children outside to exercise, make sure you follow the rules on social distancing.

While inside, there are plenty of things you can do to keep children active, such as:

- playing hide-and-seek;
- seeing who can do the most star jumps;
- making an obstacle course;
- playing music and having a dance-off.

***The most important thing is to help support your child's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and, as 'teachers from Planet Earth' put it on BBC Breakfast this morning, "...to share your calm, share your strength and share your laughter with your children. No kids are ahead, no kids are behind, your children are exactly where they need to be."***



### **Television and using digital devices**

There are lots of ways to help your child to learn, such as reading together and make-believe play. You can also use what children have watched on television or the internet to help their learning. Talk with them about what they are watching, or use their favourite TV characters in other games and activities.

Digital devices such as a laptop, desktop, tablet or smartphone can help some children learn. If your child does use them, try downloading some apps that will help them learn.

Set age-appropriate parental controls on any devices young children are using, and supervise their use of websites and apps. See advice on keeping them safe online.

Try sharing things your child makes with your friends and family online and encourage others to do the same. Your child might enjoy seeing things they have made on the screen, or seeing what other children have done.

You can also visit *Hungry Little Minds* for ideas of activities to do together without using a device.

### **Socialising while social distancing**

Spending time with other children is important for your child's development, but at the moment it is important they stay at home.

It will help them if everyone in the home talks with them through the day, responding to them and being led by the things they are interested in. Visit *Hungry Little Minds* for more information about talking with your child.

If you can, try a video call with other children. Younger children may not have a conversation as you would, but they can share activities or show each other things they have made or like. Try a call with other people that your child knows, such as grandparents. Sit and do the call with them to help. Not all children will like it, so try again another time, or have a call with family members while you are sitting down and eating a meal.

Try sitting with your child and looking at pictures of their friends or family. Talk about them and the things you have done together.



## **Advice for children of different ages - Help primary school children continue their education during coronavirus (COVID-19)**

No one expects parents to act as teachers, or to provide the activities and feedback that a school would. Speak to school which will be planning work for your child to do. Parents and carers should do their best to help children and support their learning.

### **Structuring the day**

Do not worry about trying to maintain a full routine for your child like they had at school. But children will feel more comfortable and learn better with a predictable routine to the day, even if this is difficult.

When schools provide children with work they may give you advice on how to structure the day. Generally, you should try to make sure that they:

- get up and go to bed at the same time each day;
- have regular meal times;
- have regular breaks;
- make time to be active - children are used to regular play at lunch and break times.

### **Using digital devices**

Your child's school may set them work that can be done on a digital device such as a laptop, desktop, tablet or smartphone.

Set age-appropriate parental controls on any devices your child is using and supervise their use of websites and apps. See advice on keeping them safe online, and talk to your child about online safety.

### **Reducing screen time**

Digital devices are not the only way to learn. Manage screen time with a timer and break up screen time by getting your child to:

- use books and other printed materials that their school has provided, or that you have at home;
- write by hand – try asking them to complete work by hand, write a diary, a summary of things they have learned or done each day or 'to do' lists;
- be active and get away from the screen regularly – see a selection of physical activity resources for primary school children;
- stop using digital devices at least an hour before bed.

### **Reception, year 1 and year 2 children**

The best way to help children aged 4 to 7 learn is to:

- sit with them as they work;
- do active and practical things, rather than trying to make them sit and listen for long periods;
- try to break down the work into shorter periods, based on how long they can concentrate;
- take frequent breaks;
- praise or reward them when they do well.



### **Talking**

Talk with your child throughout the day and try to explain new words. For example, discuss everything you are doing and pick out words that might be new to them.

### **Reading together**

When you read with your child try to:

- express the emotion in the story;
- give colour to the characters using voices, tone and pace;
- discuss the things you are reading.

You can make a story more interesting and help your child develop their understanding of a book by linking what you are reading to their life. For example, while reading about Cinderella going to the ball, talk about how a ball is similar to a birthday party.

Ask your child questions about what you are reading as you go. For example:

- ask some questions that only need a short answer, such as what colour something is, or the name of a character;
- ask some questions that need a longer answer, such as how a character is feeling;
- ask them to tell you what has happened in the story so far;
- Libraries are currently closed, but you can find digital services they are providing at *Libraries Connected*.

### **Phonics**

Phonics is a method schools use to teach children how to read quickly and skilfully.

Contact your school, which will be working on ways to help you with this. Try to sit with your child and practise with them, following the advice you get from their school.

### **Writing**

Try to help children to continue to practise their writing. This may include the formation of letters and familiarity with pens and pencils for younger children, or practising creative writing for older children.

Ask children to write about their day-to-day experiences of being at home, or to write letters to send to family members.

### **Numbers**

Practise counting and numbers. This does not always have to be a planned activity. For example, count things around the house while you are doing other things like cooking or cleaning.

For older children, ask school for help, or see a list of resources to help with maths recommended by teachers and school leaders.

(NB - See the full government update for more info incl. advice relating to Year 3 to 6 children

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-primary-school-children-continue-their-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19>)



### **Looking after your own mental health**

As well as thinking about the children or young people in your care and how to help keep them happy and safe at home, it is important to take care of your own mental health and wellbeing. Children and young people react, in part, to what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with a situation calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children and young people. Parents and caregivers can be more supportive to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

For advice on how to look after your mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak or visit *Every Mind Matters* for clear advice and actions to take care of your mental health and wellbeing <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>.

### **Where to get further support**

If you are worried about your, or your child or young person's, symptoms, visit the NHS self-isolation advice website for info <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>. If you are still worried, call NHS 111.

If you are worried about your child or young person's mental health, seek help from a professional. You may have services attached to your child's or young person's school or college who can help. You could also contact your GP, or look up information on children and young people's mental health services on your local CCG website or on the NHS website.

In a medical emergency, call 999. This phone line should be used when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk. A mental health emergency should be taken as seriously as a physical health emergency. For more advice on where to get support for a mental health crisis, please see the NHS website.

### **For support as a parent or carer**

*Young Minds for Parents and Carers* provides advice about mental health and behaviour problems in children and young people up to the age of 25 <https://youngminds.org.uk/>. You can call the parents' and carers' helpline on 0808 802 5544. Please be aware *Young Minds* do not provide any direct psychological services and cannot make referrals to the NHS or Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (CYPMHS).

### **Helplines and websites for your child and or young person**

If your child or young person would like to speak to someone anonymously, he/she could try calling a helpline or visiting websites such as *Child Line* (<https://www.childline.org.uk/>) and *The Mix* (<https://www.themix.org.uk/>).

*Shout* provides free, confidential support, 24/7 via text for anyone at crisis = anytime, anywhere (<https://www.giveusashout.org/>). You can:

- text SHOUT to 85258 in the UK to text with a trained Crisis Volunteer;
- text with someone who is trained and will provide active listening and collaborative problem-solving.

*Child Line* provides a confidential telephone counselling service for any child with a problem. It comforts, advises and protects. You can:

- call 0800 1111 any time for free;
- have an online chat with a counsellor and/or check out the message boards.

### **Information on mental health taken directly from -**

***<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>***

With best wishes, **Paula Bestall - Headteacher**



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