



COVID-19 Information for School Staff

There is a lot of uncertainty around the current COVID-19 pandemic, particularly given that the situation is constantly developing and the information about the virus remains incomplete. Understandably, this is causing a lot of worry and anxiety for everyone. It is normal to feel worried, stressed and anxious when we are faced with uncertain times and we need to remember that by looking after our own mental health, we will be better placed to look after our children and young people. While this is a unique situation, it can be useful to consider this as we would any other critical incident and to draw upon what we have learned from other critical incidents. With this in mind, you already have the skills you need to face this upcoming period of uncertainty, we offer the information in this resource leaflet in support of your work with children and young people.

SCPS Support

While we may not be coming into school, we are still here to support you while you are working with your community. SCPS is linked to all maintained schools and settings in Wandsworth borough and are in regular contact with SENCOs and Head Teachers. For further information around Educational Psychology involvement at this time, please speak with these staff members in your school.

Staff wellbeing

For a lot of us, the coming weeks will look very different to what we had originally planned but where possible within your daily life, try to include something from each of the '5 ways to wellbeing' (developed by New Economics Foundation):



Be active

Where possible, and in line with daily government advice, try to get outside at least once per day, or exercise in the garden or indoors. Lots of apps and online resources are available to support this.



Take notice

Take care of your mental wellbeing by having a break from the news or social media. Notice and appreciate the small things and practice mindfulness or engage in something you enjoy.



Connect

Connecting socially is crucial for our mental wellbeing and social-distancing can make this very challenging. If you can, hold video calls with friends and family to keep in touch more regularly.



Give

Research tells us that giving back to the community helps us to feel valuable and can result in feeling happier. Thinking about how to support those who are vulnerable during this difficult time may be one way of doing this.



Keep learning

Learning a new skill or honing an existing one gives us a sense of purpose or achievement. While we're learning, we're less likely to experience anxious thoughts or worries.

Here are some links to sources of online resources and support that you may find helpful:

How to protect your mental health (BBC): <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-51873799>

Coronavirus and your wellbeing (Mind UK): <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

5 ways to wellbeing (Mindkit): <https://www.mindkit.org.uk/5-ways-to-wellbeing/>

<https://www.annafreud.org/media/11242/looking-after-each-other-ourselves-final.pdf>

Looking After Ourselves and Each Other (Anna Freud Centre)

<https://www.annafreud.org/media/11242/looking-after-each-other-ourselves-final.pdf>

NHS advice: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Mental Health Considerations during COVID-19 Outbreak (WHO) https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_2

Pupil Wellbeing

Although it is tempting to try and protect children and young people from difficult topics, they are more likely to worry when they are kept in the dark. Children and young people will be aware of what is happening but may not have all the facts they need to understand it. The following are some suggestions around communicating with your pupils about Coronavirus:

- Where possible, provide space and time to talk and listen. Be clear that you are happy to answer any questions that pupils have. Try to answer any questions honestly but keep things in context e.g. "Sadly, some people do die, but the vast majority of people will recover, and children seem to be only mildly affected". Our instinct might be to 'make it all better', but it is normal to feel scared, sad and angry in the face of what is happening. Tell them that what is happening is not normal but that their feelings are.
- Reassure children and young people that their own risk is very low but that we all need to 'do our bit' to look after people who might be very unwell. Underline how helpful they are being by following the rules about hygiene and social-distancing. Knowing we're being altruistic helps us to bear the tough times.
- Give positive messages about everything you are doing as a school to keep yourselves safe. Talk about all the work people around the world are doing to find treatments and a vaccine.

- Ensure that explanations are developmentally appropriate and adjusted according to children and young people's needs:
 - Young children up to about age seven will need very simple explanations that relate to their own experiences. Explain that, like other germs, Coronavirus can spread between people and make them ill. But because Coronavirus is a new germ that we don't know everything about, we need to take more care and so things might be a bit different for a while.
 - Older children and tweens will want to know more. They may have heard partial explanations and 'filled in the gaps' themselves with their own ideas, so check what they already think they know about it.
 - Teenagers will have a similar capacity to understand what's going on as adults. They will need calm, factual information and opportunities to talk through their worries and disappointments.

Here are some links to online organisations with further information that you may find helpful:

Talking to children and young people about the Coronavirus

Talking to children about Coronavirus (British Psychological Society): <https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/talking-children-about-coronavirus>

Talking to Children (Childmind): <https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>

How to talk to your child about coronavirus (Unicef): <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-talk-your-child-about-coronavirus-covid-19>

Tips and guidance on supporting preschool children (Zero to Three); <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3210-tips-for-families-coronavirus>

Talking to children (National Association of School Psychologists) [https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)

Stories about Coronavirus for children

Visual stories are a useful way of helping children to understand the Coronavirus. Here are some links to some good examples:

ELSA: Coronavirus Story for Children: <https://www.elsa-support.co.uk/coronavirus-story-for-children/>

Hello! Story about Coronavirus for young children: https://660919d3-b85b-43c3-a3ad-3de6a9d37099.filesusr.com/ugd/64c685_319c5acf38d34604b537ac9fae37fc80.pdf

A social story about pandemics (Carol Gray): <https://carolgraysocialstories.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Pandemics-and-the-Coronavirus.pdf?fbclid=IwAR23zxNIbEumpw4oKIM7Xy3VIKnA25b8Gi53N6YiFleKB9Vx0LQypSPYzzg>

A Social Story about the coronavirus: <https://www.ppmd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/The-Corona-Virus-Free-Printable-Updated-2-The-Autism-Educator-.pdf>

A comic exploring coronavirus to help young people understand:
<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus?t=1584464333506>

Information videos for children about the Coronavirus

Information video on Coronavirus for Primary age children (KS2) (Brainpop):
<https://www.brainpop.com/health/diseasesinjuriesandconditions/coronavirus/>

Information video on Coronavirus for older children/adults (WHO):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOV1aBVYKGA&feature=youtu.be>

Promoting children's wellbeing

Advice for young people who are feeling anxious about Coronavirus (Young Minds):
<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus>

Helping children cope with stress (WHO):
https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf?sfvrsn=f3a063ff_2

Advice for older pupils and adults about looking after their emotional well-being.
<https://afsp.org/taking-care-of-your-mental-health-in-the-face-of-uncertainty/?fbclid=IwAR3ScDBfuhV5INKyutAG9IPNm4JnjLLOmHxv5w8SR9pBbDDU-8Hhy1QH-L8>

Special needs and the Coronavirus

Parent-focused ideas from Special Needs Jungle about how to support children with anxiety around coronavirus, including an easy-read explanation for children and adults with learning difficulties:
<https://www.specialneedsjungle.com/calming-coronavirus-anxiety-children-everyone-else/#Update>

Government advice about coronavirus for education settings

Guidance to educational setting: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>

Note: as the situation and sources of information are developing, the above tips and links may be updated.

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