



# THE WILLINK SCHOOL

Head Teacher: Mr P Fry MA Deputy Head: Mr A Sizer MA Assistant Deputy Head: Miss J Evans MA

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20<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Parents & Carers

I am writing to provide further information on the current situation concerning the national response to, and implications for the school of, the coronavirus outbreak.

Firstly, I urge you to talk to your children about how essential it is to self-isolate if necessary and always keep to the 2m rule for social distancing. Although children and young adults are less affected than older generations it is essential, to reduce the impact of COVID-19 and the length of the emergency measures, that teenagers respect these new requirements. For a simple guide on self-isolation and social distancing please follow <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-51506729>

Further to the information sent on Friday about buses, the WIL10 service will not now run this side of the Easter break. West Berkshire and Hampshire are now running a reduced/half timetable. Please contact them for details.

We have received some calls this morning regarding issues accessing school work. Students should have their ClassCharts access details and PIN which they use to access homework updates throughout the year. 986 students have logged into ClassCharts today alone. If you are unsure of your student and/or parent codes to access ClassCharts please do contact the school office. After setting work direct to classes during the next two weeks, our intention is to set more generic work for students. More details on this will be sent in a subsequent email.

Please remember that the COVID-19 pandemic means that looking after our physical and mental health is more important than ever.

## Advice for Parents and Carers

- **Accept:** it won't be possible to replicate a full school timetable for a variety of reasons. Giving yourself and your children permission to accept this can be a big weight lifted.
- **Expect stress:** this is an uncertain and unpredictable situation, stress and anxiety are normal.
- **Reassure:** children and young people can sometimes believe they are responsible for things that are clearly beyond their control. Reassure children that it is the adult's job to make sure things are OK and to keep them safe.
- **Stay connected:** friendships are a key resiliency factor for children and young people. Most children see their friends nearly every day of the week and so not being in contact with them for some time might be upsetting. Is it possible for children to talk to their friends on the phone? Perhaps establish a group Skype or WhatsApp call? Perhaps they could write letters to each other.
- **Normalise** the experience: normalising the experience is likely to reduce anxiety for many children. Reassure children that lots of adults and other children are in the same situation.



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- Have a **routine and structure**: having a plan and a predictable routine for the day can be very reassuring. As adults we like to know what is going to happen, and children like this too. A consistent routine lets everyone be secure about the plans for the day. It is often useful to involve children in creating this routine, so that they feel part of the plan, rather than the plan being imposed on them. You could display the routine using a timeline, or maybe pictures and visuals. Encourage children to develop independence by referring to their own routine/plan themselves. **Willink Wellbeing Journal (posted on ClassCharts and updated weekly)** can help them to create this.
- Avoid putting too much pressure on **academic work**: most parents and carers aren't teachers and so it's OK not to be doing 'school work' for six hours a day. It might be more important to be **spending time together**, building relationships, enjoying shared activities and reassuring children, as opposed to replicating the school timetable. Equally, it might be helpful to schedule time apart in quiet zones throughout the house.
- **Keep work in one place**: if children are doing school work or project work at home, try to keep it all in one place so that it doesn't spread out over the house. This can help to maintain a work/home boundary. We know that people live in different circumstances that might mean this isn't always possible, so perhaps there might be other ways to 'signal' the end of working e.g. putting away the work and then enjoying a favourite song or shared dance!
- **Reduce access to rolling news**: it is important to keep up to date with new developments and announcements, but it can be hard to switch off from the constant stream of news from media outlets and social media. Reduce the time spent hearing, reading or watching news. Try to protect children from distressing media coverage.
- **Supervise screen-time**: it is likely that children and young people will be using screens more often over the coming weeks e.g. phones, tablets, gaming consoles and the internet. If this is the case make sure they are supervised. Ensure appropriate content filters are active: the UK Safer Internet Centre offers guidance on setting up parental control. Try to ensure all children have a balanced range of activities each day. Involve children and young people in these discussions so that they feel part of the plan.
- **Provide reassurance about exams being cancelled**: Year 11 and 13 students may now be concerned about the announcement that exams later this year will not be going ahead as planned. They may feel like all their hard work has been for nothing. Reassure young people that the Prime Minister has said that all children and young people will get the qualification they worked towards, and reassure them that the government and Department for Education are working on a plan.
- **Play**: play is fundamental to children's wellbeing and development – but is also a great way to reduce stress in adults.



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**“Self-isolation” does not need to result in loneliness.** Fortunately, there are many reputable sources of support which can be accessed remotely. Please see some suggestions below:

Format	Name	Description
Journal	<b>Willink Wellbeing Journal</b>	Weekly edition will be posted via ClassCharts and designed to help students to set goals, track achievements and be mindful.
Website	<b>The Body Coach TV (YouTube channel)</b>	Daily 30 minute PE lesson which can be completed at home.
App	<b>Daylio</b>	Keeps track of your activities and create patterns to become more productive.
Website/App	<b>Headspace</b>	For the next few months, there will be a free section in the Headspace app called Weathering the Storm. It includes meditation, sleep and movement exercises designed to help guide you through this time of social distancing.
App	<b>Mindshift</b>	Mindshift will help you learn how to relax and develop more helpful ways of thinking.
App	<b>Silvercloud</b>	Support wellbeing, time management and other issues.
Website or Telephone	<b>The Mix</b>	Support service for young people. Online tutorials, online chat or free confidential telephone service.
App	<b>Calm Harm</b>	Free app to promote Health and Fitness for young people 12yrs+. This includes activities to regulate breathing and 5 or 15 minute activities which can distract young people with the urge to self-harm.
Website	<b>Children’s Society Advice</b> <a href="http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/">HYPERLINK "http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/"</a>	In these challenging times, ‘Heads Together’ have put together a set of activities to ease anxiety plus other helpful advice, helplines and resources for parents and children.
Website and Telephone	<b>Young Minds</b>	If there are concerns about a young person's mental health during this difficult time, you can contact the Young Minds helplines.
Telephone	<b>Parents’ Helpline</b>	If you are a parent/carer who needs advice about your child's mental health you can contact the Parents' Helpline directly on 0808 802 5544 between 9:30am-4pm.
Text Message	<b>Young Minds Crisis Messenger</b>	If you are a young person experiencing a mental health crisis you can text YM to 85258 for free 24/7 support.

We will continue to update you on the school’s position when we have further information. Thank you for your continued support and understanding in these unprecedented times; it is much appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Peter Fry, Head