

26th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am writing to all parents and carers to provide some advice about supporting your child at home during the period of schools being closed and the social distancing measures, and stay at home messages in place across the country.

As a school we are providing some opportunities for your child to complete learning tasks at home, we are also able to signpost you to a number of other resources available. I've provided a bit more information later in this letter, but please remember these resources are for you to use at your discretion to support your child at home.

The most important consideration during this time is that your child is supported to be happy and healthy. Take some time to talk with your child about what this looks like. Some families may find it useful to structure parts of the day, for example agreed periods to complete work, watch television or play in the garden, for other families a more relaxed approach will work better.

Below is some advice that may support you during this period:

- **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.
- **Don't try to replicate a school time-table.** It won't be possible to do this for a variety of reasons. Giving yourself and your child permission to accept this can be a big weight lifted.
- **Expect stress and pressure.** This is an uncertain and unpredictable situation, stress and anxiety are normal. If your child has difficulties linked to the current situation help them understand this is normal so they do not enter a spiral of feeling negative. For example, you could say "this is a really difficult time for everyone and will be one of the most challenging things you do as a child, don't worry if you don't get it right all the time".
- **Help your child stay connected to friends and family.** These relationships are key and using video calls can maintain the connections. Please do remember to supervise your child online and ensure they are safe.

- **Normalise this experience.** By explaining to your child that other children and families are in the same situation will help reduce any concerns they may have.
 - **Have a routine and structure that works for your family.** Having a plan and predictable day can be reassuring. As adults we like to know what is happening and children like this too. It does not have to cover every minute of the day, but involving your child in making some plans for the day may support a happy household.
 - **Don't worry if the routine or structure is not perfect.** Remember this is not a normal situation, if a structure or routine is causing more stress, friction or arguments then it is okay to be more 'free-flow'.
- finally*
- **Play.** Play is fundamental to children's wellbeing and development – children of all ages! It's also a great way to reduce stress in adults.

One final tip that may help is to remember the time pressures usually associated with daily life have changed. Therefore, taking more time to do something with your child is a positive thing. For example, there is more time to play games or do the gardening. For young children aim to continue activities until they indicate they would like to move on, often as adults we will get bored of game before a child but continuing for a bit longer will support the flow to your child's day.

I know that some pupils/students, or their parents will wish to continue to complete learning tasks and we are happy to support with this. At Orion we are providing opportunities to learn at home through work packs and links to websites on our school website.

Finally, please remember that whilst school is closed for many children to physically attend we have not 'shut down'. You can still communicate with school and contact us should you need to. We will also contact you regularly to check in with how things are going. I'd be delighted to see examples of work and other activities pupils are doing during this time, please send any photos or work or other activities to office@orionacademy.co.uk.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Smith
Head Teacher