

1st May 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

RE: Weekly Update – 1st May 2020

We are delighted to have seen so many students engage with remote learning this week. As you will be aware from our previous communications, we are working hard to ensure that remote learning is interactive, engaging and beneficial to our students. Please be reminded that Friday 8th May 2020 has been designated as a public bank holiday in recognition of the 75th Anniversary of VE Day, marking the end of World War II. As a Public Holiday, there will be no work set for students on this day and teaching staff will not be available to contact. All enquiries will be dealt with on Monday 11th May.

This week, we have seen staff begin to run lessons that students can remotely connect into using Google Hangouts. For anyone who hasn't yet been able to join one of these sessions, they are accessed through Google Classroom where teaching staff will post a link that will allow students to join the session. For safeguarding purposes, these live sessions will be recorded. The Assistant Principal, Mr Mahroof will be sending an email out following this letter which will clearly outline the protocols and behaviour expected of students who join these interactive sessions; parents are requested to read this with their son/daughter.

Despite speculation in the media over the last week, the Government is yet to confirm any arrangements for when schools will reopen. We are continuing to plan ahead to ensure that the current remote learning arrangements remain beneficial and engaging for our students. Please be assured that if we hear anything, we will let you know as soon as practicably possible.

Health and Wellbeing

Being a parent or carer can be challenging in everyday situations and now, more than ever, taking care of your own mental health is important. Staying at home more or having to work in a difficult situation can put different pressures on everyone. Changes to adults' mental health can sometimes affect children, as they may pick up on anxiety or low mood. That doesn't mean you should hide your feelings, but it is important to try explain it to them, give young people reassurances and for yourselves to seek help and support if you need it.

There has been a raft of advice and guidance published by the government and other sources over recent weeks, and particularly since schools closed, which all aim to support parents and students to focus on their learning, to keep them safe and to diminish their fears and anxieties around coronavirus itself. We have included a range of advice and sources of support below.

Coping Strategies for Positive Mental Health

Here are eight things you can do to look after your own mental health:

- Be physically active by regularly walking, jogging or taking part in online exercise classes;
- Try to maintain a regular sleeping pattern;
- Keep in touch with friends and family on the phone or via video call;
- Join an online support group, for example Netmums have forums for mums and dads;
- Try to have some time for yourself, if possible;
- Limit time spent on social media and looking at the news to reduce anxiety;

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- Make a plan for each day to create structure and routine;
- Be kind to yourself; there will be good days and bad days and that's okay!

How to Support Your Child's Mental Health

Here are six things you can do to support the mental health and well-being of your child:

- Talk to them about what's going on. Find out how they're feeling and what they're thinking about. Let them know it's okay to feel scared or unsure, and try to answer their questions and reassure them. Remember, you do not need to know all the answers, but talking things through can help them feel calmer.
- Help your child to reflect on how they're feeling and encourage them to think about the things they can do to make them feel safer and less worried.
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- Reassure them that this will pass, you're there for them, and you will get through this together.
- Spend time doing positive activities with your child to help reassure them and reduce their anxiety. This is also a great way of providing a space for them to talk through their concerns without having a 'big chat'. You could try reading with them, playing, painting or cooking.
- Keep as many regular routines as possible so that your child feels safe and that things are stable.

Young Minds - Support for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Young Minds has a range of advice that you may find useful and is available by clicking [here](#).

The Young Minds Parents Helpline continues to operate during the pandemic; the helpline is free of charge and available on **0808 802 5544**, Monday to Friday for anyone concerned about the mental health of a child or young person.

NSPCC – Advice for Children, Parents and Families

Whether you are working from home with a family for the first time or supporting your children with anxiety, the NSPCC has tips and advice for parents and carers, available on line by clicking [here](#).

The section entitled *'talking to children worried about coronavirus'* provides useful guidance on discussing feelings and worries, keeping in touch with family and friends, balancing screen-time, creating structure and routine and helping to give young people a sense of control.

The NSPCC have a helpline for parents and carers where counsellors are available to talk through any worries, concerns or anxieties. Please reach out if you need help by calling **0808 800 5000** or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

Department for Education and Public Health England – Advice and Helplines

Public Health England has published some guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and looking after their own during the coronavirus pandemic. This is available by clicking [here](#).

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The Department for Education have launched a new helpline to answer questions about COVID-19 related to education. Staff, parents and pupils can contact them by calling **0800 046 8687** or emailing DFE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk between 8.00am and 6.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Online Safety

It has always been important to make sure children remain safe online. This is even more important now, as we have had to adapt to the current situation; school closures mean that young people are likely to be spending more time online, both accessing work and for pleasure.

As an Academy, we are continuing to provide safe online learning environments, by ensuring resources and tools are safe to use and compliant with data protection requirements. It is important that parents and carers are aware of what their children are accessing online and are able to protect them from risk.

Opportunities for children to talk to and play with friends are currently limited to online interaction. Whilst rare, there are negative influencers who use the internet, social media and online gaming to groom children and young people and spread extreme ideas.

Boredom and increased time spent online unsupervised could cause children to engage with new people, potentially making them more vulnerable. Groomers and radicalisers can target young people by sending friend requests on popular sites and platforms to see who responds. They may strike up a conversation to build a relationship with them and ask them to chat privately. These chats can sometimes happen on forums which allow anonymous posting. The content is often unsuitable for under 18s and is not a safe place.

Some groomers may seek to commit sexual offences against children, including sharing explicit images, whilst radicalisers want as many people as possible to believe in their extreme views. They may encourage young people to take action which might break the law; this is how people are drawn into terrorism.

To keep children safe, ensure where possible that they are using technology in an area of the house where adults can see and hear the nature of any interactions taking place. Children should also be dressed appropriately if using a webcam.

Internet Matters

Internet matters is the main online safety advice site for parents in the UK. Internet Matters has a wealth of information for parents, including simple tutorials on how to set up an internet filter on your broadband, settings for all devices, advice and guidance and much more. It is available online by clicking [here](#).

Reporting Concerns

If you're worried about online sexual abuse or the way someone has been communicating online, you can make a report to CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command) online by clicking [here](#).

If you are concerned about any aspect of your child's wellbeing or safety, please contact one of our Designated Safeguarding Leads, Caroline Hickman or Stewart Tait, to report your concerns.

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We are here to help. The Academy can be contacted by email to solihull.info@wmgacademy.org.uk or by telephone, where messages are routinely monitored; please let us know if we can help in any way.

Yours faithfully,



Mrs K Tague
Executive Principal



Mr S Tait
Associate Principal

Your Top 'Go-to' Advice on Health and Wellbeing during the COVID-19 Outbreak

It is important to look after yourself during this outbreak and the following websites can help:



every mind matters

This is a hard time for everyone and it's normal to feel down sometimes. There are many things you can do to support your wellbeing. Please visit www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/

A new local NHS mental health support service offers emotional help, guidance and reassurance to people who may be finding the current situation overwhelming. The Solihull helplines are:

0-19 yr olds - Mon-Fri (8am-8pm): 0121 301 2750 - Weekends/evenings (8pm-8am): 0121 301 5500

11-25 yr olds- Counselling and support 24/7: www.kooth.com

Over 18s - 7 days a week (9am-11pm): 0121 262 3555

Key workers - 7 days a week (9am-11pm): 0121 663 1217



Staying Active at Home

We're all now spending a lot more time at home and that means it's getting harder to keep active.

Find ideas at www.solihullactive.co.uk



Stopping smoking

Smokers are more susceptible to viruses and smoking can worsen or prolong respiratory conditions. You can self-refer to Gateway using the Freephone no. 0800 599 9880 to start your quit journey by phone or Skype. Or visit: www.gatewayfs.org/our-work/health-and-wellbeing-services/solihull-lifestyle-service/



Solihull Integrated Addiction Services (SIAS)

If you are in need of support or advice around alcohol or substance misuse, please contact SIAS in confidence on 0121 301 4141 or visit www.sias-solihull.org.uk

SAMARITANS

When things feel really tough....

Samaritans can listen at any time of the day or night. You can talk to them about anything that's troubling you. Call free on 116 123 or visit www.samaritans.org



Domestic Abuse

This time can be challenging for adults and children living with domestic abuse and for many survivors, staying home may not be the safest option. If you or someone else is in immediate danger please call 999 and ask for the police. You can phone a 24 hour helpline on 0808 2000 247 or visit www.solihull.gov.uk/domesticabuse



Staying at Home with Children

Staying at home can bring a range of challenges, bored and frustrated children and increasing demands on parents and carers.

For advice on managing this time at home, please visit www.solgrid.org.uk/fivetothrive/parenting

For general advice on the outbreak please visit www.gov.uk or www.solihull.gov.uk



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METROPOLITAN
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FREE online Solihull Approach Parenting Courses

We are pleased to launch the FREE online Solihull Approach Parenting Courses for ALL Solihull Residents to gain knowledge, confidence and skills to support their parenting.

Details of how to access the FREE Solihull Approach Parenting Course are as follows:

- a) Go to www.inourplace.co.uk
- b) Create an account using an email address and password
- c) Scroll down to choose a course
- d) Click on 'Already got a discount coupon?'
Select the relevant course & insert the access code - APPLEJACKS:
 - Understanding Your Child
 - Understanding Your Teenager's Brain
 - Understanding Your Baby
 - Understanding Your Pregnancy
- e) Click 'Apply coupon'

A certificate can be downloaded once the course has been completed, although you don't have to do all the modules in one go - on returning to the website and signing in, your account will 'remember' where you have got up.

The courses works on laptops, PCs, smart phones and tablets. Please note: a modern browser is required (e.g. Google Chrome, Firefox, Explorer 10).

We hope you enjoy the course and please do feel free to pass on the access code to any friends or relatives who may also find this helpful.

For any technical issues, please contact the Solihull Approach team
on 0121 296 4448 or via email to
solihull.approach@heartofengland.nhs.uk