



## Parent and Carers Wellbeing Newsletter: 13<sup>th</sup> September 2020

***“There is no health without mental health.” (World Health Organization, 2009)***

Our emotional and physical health can be severely compromised during these unsettling times. **Self-care** is very important, as we are often the last person we think about and look after.

It’s particularly important at this time to enable us to be as resilient as possible for ourselves, and also to manage and alleviate our children’s worries, and to provide them with re-assurance.

Some hopefully helpful links are detailed below:

**Mental Wellbeing audio guides**- from NHS Every Mind Matters

**Understanding anxiety** - colourful guide from the Priory Group

**A free app for sleep, anxiety and stress**- from Insight Timer

**e-learning: staying mentally well through Covid19** - from Pooky Knightsmith

**Working from home wellbeing action plan** - from the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust

With this in mind, as we have fully re-opened our school we wanted to outline our guiding principles for how to move forward through this transition as smoothly as possible.



### **Safe**

We want you and your child to feel safe, calm and re-assured, and to know that it will continue to be okay being back at school. So we have worked on creating an environment that is and feels physically and emotionally safe for all of us. We want to build up predictability and consistency around hygiene and other safety rules which school staff will role-model noticeably, and praise your child for following accordingly. We have and will continue to support any child through any misunderstandings and refer to the benefits of what we are doing.

We want you to feel involved and invested, and to start to re-inforce these rules and messages at home as we continue in this term. We added to our FAQ sheet before the start of term to try and anticipate some of your concerns; we will continue to update you with the detailed guidance and regulations when they change via our website and Class Dojo. As you know from our amendments to the staggered timings, we are responding to feedback wherever it is possible to do so.

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We hope to involve the children to some extent in co-creating rules surrounding playtimes; if we work with them, they will have a sense of ownership and the rules would have more meaning for them.

### **Welcoming**

As the children return, we wanted them to feel excited and happy coming into school and we wanted them to know that we are genuinely delighted to have them back and to be able to see them again. We have sincerely missed them. They will need to know that they belong, and feel a part of things and we will do everything we can to continue to enable this. Our Wallands Values of Kindness, Responsibility, Resilience, Cooperation, Aspiration and Pride will be ever-present and more needed now than ever.

### **All Togetherness**

So, how are we creating these warm, welcoming feelings of care and nurture when we can't touch and need to keep a safe distance? We need to create a truly inclusive environment in which the children feel surrounded by support, and know that they can rely on all the adults around them and that we are all reinforcing the same messages and sense of togetherness.

### **Nurturing**

Recent research conducted at Reading University highlights the importance of allowing the children time and space to play and to re-connect socially with their peers. An incredible amount of work has happened over the summer holidays to enable this further, with more play equipment and a safer school environment. A key point is to play the long game here, and not rush ahead with trying to make up for lost time or to add intense academic pressure and stress to the children, some of whom are already in a high alert state.

We will focus primarily on continuing to settle your children in, on meeting their social and emotional needs first and foremost, and on their readiness to learn skills. The general expert consensus is that we should be laying the foundations for them in terms of nurture first and foremost, not solely teaching them in the plain, traditional sense.

This Covid generation of children are going to be unique, and we want to enable them to flourish which will not be an overnight job. We have the potential to do a lot of good here, and to repair the significant rupture that this virus has caused and to prepare our children to be strong adults in the future as well as happy and resilient children in their present.

### **Anticipating their concerns**

We know it is important to recognise that each child is unique, and that they may have had very different experiences of Home Learning and staying at home, even within the same family. Many children will naturally have had mixed feelings and attitudes about coming back to school. It was really helpful to see your responses to the google form that Mrs Collis sent out, as it helped us

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support the children better. Please continue to let us know as issues arise so we can support the children through this period. We have included some further wellbeing links that we have received.

### **Evidence based approaches for enhancing well-being:**

**The 4 pillar plan – how to relax, eat, move and sleep your way to better health:**

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Pillar-Plan-Relax-Longer-Healthier/dp/0241303559>

**5 Steps to Well-being :** <https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/improve-mental-wellbeing.aspx>:

If you give them a try, you may feel happier, more positive and able to get the most from life.

- **Connect** – connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Spend time developing these relationships. Learn more in [Connect for mental wellbeing](#).
- **Be active** – you don't have to go to the gym. Take a walk, go cycling or play a game of football. Find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life. Learn more in [Get active for mental wellbeing](#).
- **Keep learning** – learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence. So why not sign up for that cooking course, start learning to play a musical instrument, or figure out how to fix your bike? Find out more in [Learn for mental wellbeing](#).
- **Give to others** – even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering at your local community centre, can improve your mental wellbeing and help you build new social networks. Learn more in [Give for mental wellbeing](#).
- **Be mindful** – be more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Some people call this awareness "mindfulness". It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges. Learn more in [Mindfulness for mental wellbeing](#).

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