

Monday 23 March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Wellbeing and Mental Health: Advice for parents/carer during school closure

We are humbled that some parents have asked for advice on how to support your child with their learning during the period of school closure. Whilst we would definitely not want to appear to be claiming any expertise (you know your child best, of course!) we hope that this advice provides some useful hints and tips which might help you support your child during the coming weeks. In particular, we hope that the information here about mental health and wellbeing is helpful in these uncertain times.

Keep routines

- Showering, getting dressed (very important)
- Eat breakfast. For some teenagers this maybe a new concept...maybe eat all together as a family...a bit later than normal...8.30am/9.00am...good chance for teenagers to sleep a bit more
- If they are still in pyjamas – encourage them to get dressed – even just changing into different, if equally relaxed clothing, is a good idea.
- At breakfast set out the plans for the day...break it up into blocks of time and be sure to indicate what food is going to be consumed. Teenagers always want to know when the next meal is and what is it going to be...

School Work and Online Learning

- Encourage your child to follow their usual timetable. Their teachers will be setting work on Google Classroom for each lesson of the day.
- Think about where your child should work – perhaps this could be done in the kitchen or a room with a table downstairs.
- If your child does their work in their bedroom check-in frequently so you can gauge their work rate and check that they are working. Keep in mind that most teenagers are communicating socially a lot of the time; this may not necessarily mean they are not working well – it is about getting the right balance.
- Ask them how Google Classrooms is working? Do they need anything? Are they stuck etc? Of course, they may not want to discuss their learning with you – fairly normal for a teenager!

Mealtimes

- Involve your child in preparing meals and planning what you will eat – as well as in tidying up afterwards.
- Aim to eat together once each day and talk about how things are going.
- Try to avoid taking meals in bedrooms – it is important to avoid too much isolation.

Downtime

- Try to vary the time when your child is not completing school work – it is important that teenagers do more than use devices for relaxation.
- Reading time... reading their reading books for 30 mins.
- Communicate with relatives / friends via phone or write emails.

- Domestic chores – learning how to use a washing machine and the different washes, how to iron a shirt or trousers, how to vacuum, clean a toilet, descale a showerhead...
- DIY, gardening, helping on the farm perhaps...
- Walk the dog, care for pets.
- Learn a new skill – endless possibilities on YouTube.
- Make a playlist – try different themes / occasions
- Exercise – outside if permitted.
- Watch films – perhaps as a family.
- Traditional board games, Lego
- You could allow a one to two hour ‘siesta’ or quiet time at the end of the afternoon ...teenagers chilling with their phones/tablets/gaming in their own bedrooms...everyone in the house needs some space and teenagers need time to check in with their peers.

Things to avoid

- Loneliness/isolation – having teenagers in their rooms all day...drag them out...they won’t realise it but they will be happier with some activities...usually after they have done them!
- Siblings arguing – probably had too much time together...separate and give them time to cool down.
- Over exposure to media reports on COVID-19 – anxiety etc. If loved ones become ill – give your teenagers the facts – don’t hide things - use simple, honest and truthful language and explain what is known and not know - it is fine to say ‘I don’t know’.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

- If you are concerned about your child’s wellbeing during school closure, contact your child’s Form Tutor or Head of Year in the usual way. They will be able to offer support or signpost to appropriate services.
- There are lots of resources online that provide information and support for young people with mental health issues or who are feeling stressed or low.

Specific guidance on managing worries about coronavirus:

<https://www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/anna-freud-learning-network/coronavirus/>

www.kooth.com - **Kooth** is a web based confidential support service available to young people. Kooth provides a safe and secure means of accessing mental health and wellbeing support designed specifically for young people.

Kooth offers young people the opportunity to have a text-based conversation with a qualified counsellor. Counsellors are available from 12 noon to 10 pm on weekdays and 6 pm to 10 pm at weekends, every day of the year on a drop-in basis. Young people can access regular booked online counselling sessions as needed. Outside counselling hours’ young people can message our team and get support by the next day.

When students register with Kooth they will have support available to them now and in the future. Support can be gained not only through counselling but articles, forums and discussion boards. All content is age appropriate, clinically approved and fully moderated. To find out

more visit www.Kooth.com where young people can register and others can find out more about the service.

You can also view a short video about the service at:

<https://vimeo.com/318731977/a9f32c87de>

MindLine also offers direct support to young people with mental health concerns.

***MindLine** is here to offer mental health information, guidance, a listening ear and support. We are open 12pm to 11pm Mon – Fri 5pm to 11pm Sat - Sun*

To get in touch:

- Call 0300 561 0000
- Text 'Mind' to 81066
- Text 'Mind' followed by your question
- Webchat at <http://www.mindlinecumbria.org>

There is also a PowerPoint presentation with some further links to excellent resources to support mental health and wellbeing that has been uploaded to www.ullswatercc.co.uk.

Finally, try to keep things as normal as possible – routine and structure is good...but with some flexibility....'flexible normality'. This creates a sense of calmness and reassurance for children.

We appreciate that the current situation is incredibly difficult and may cause distress to our young people. If you are concerned about your child during the period of school closure, please contact school via email. If your child wishes to contact their Form Tutor or Head of Year, they should also do so from their school email address.

Head of Year 7 – mforrest@ullswatercc.co.uk

Head of Year 8 – scooper@ullswatercc.co.uk

Head of Year 9 – cjones@ullswatercc.co.uk

Head of Year 10 – mcastle@ullswatercc.co.uk

Head of Year 11 – gkey@ullswatercc.co.uk

Head of Sixth Form – rjackson@ullswatercc.co.uk

Designated Safeguarding Lead – frichardson@ullswatercc.co.uk

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead – j.key@ullswatercc.co.uk

Attendance and Student Services Manager – aleah@ullswatercc.co.uk

SENCO – rridley@ullswatercc.co.uk

Any subject-specific questions about learning should be directed to Heads of Department via email. Contact details have been already been shared for these staff.

Finally, if you have any concerns of a safeguarding nature, please follow the contact advice below:

Our Designated Safeguarding Leads are Mrs Richardson and Mrs Key.
Email: safeguarding@ullswatercc.co.uk

If you are concerned that you or a child is at risk of immediate harm, please contact 999

The contact number for Cumbria Safeguarding Hub is 03332 401 727

This section of the Cumbria Safeguarding Children's Partnership website is aimed at parents, carers and guardians and aims to provide information regarding safeguarding and related matters that may be worrying them:

<https://cumbriasafeguardingchildren.co.uk/LSCB/parents/tiles.asp>

Thank you for all the kind words of support that have been shared over the last week. Most importantly, please take care and stay well.

Yours faithfully

Mrs F Richardson
Assistant Headteacher