



February 2021

Dear Blatch Families,

As the snow melts and we all wonder how best to occupy our children next week, we thought it may be useful to both suggest some possible activities and signpost support services. Of course as is always the case with these emails, the information may be directly useful for your family, to pass to friends, or be of no use whatsoever to you. However it is sent with the spirit of community; of us "all being in this together" and links well with our school motto of 'Involvement, Achievement and Care'.

We are very aware that giving you too much information is actually detrimental to this supportive intent. So there is some new information here, but all previous support emails are available [here](#). For families of Year 7 students especially these may be worth a browse as the information from the summer term may be something you didn't necessarily look at.

Activities

Knowing how much many students in Key Stage 3 enjoyed their time away from screens on Wednesday of this week, it may well be a great time to remind them of this and encourage them off their different social media platforms, PS4s, xBoxes and YouTube.

There are lots of activities on the previous emails, to be found at the link listed above. But here are a few new ones. Many thanks to the parents and carers as well as staff who have given us some of these recommendations.

1. **Lockdown Made Me.** This is a great series of [3 YouTube videos](#) for the aspiring writers out there. Spoken word artist [Woodzy](#) runs the three online creative writing workshops for teenagers.
2. **The Exchange.** A local company called [LOOKOUT](#) connects young people, professional artists and local businesses through creativity. They are working with the Brighton Festival this year to produce a project called The Exchange working with young people aged 16 – 18 years and 5 professional artists to offer one to one creative mentoring and working towards an online celebratory event in the Brighton Festival. So great for Year 11s. Details are [here](#).
3. **Amplified.** [Little Green Pig](#) are a company who have worked at BMS with our students and in fact Adam Webb, their Learning Manager, has previously taught at Blatch. Amplified is a project they have run in previous years as part of the Brighton Festival and hope to run again this year. It is part YouTube confessional, part miniTED-talk, to hear some of the diverse stories of young people from across the city, and learn about what matters to them. Information [here](#).
4. **Reading** is a perfect activity for lockdown. We hope you'll enjoy reading our e-books. If you prefer to read ebooks on your tablet or smartphone you can download the Sora app from AppStore. Your Sora username and password are the same for all devices. Why not write an ebook review and email it to us? We'll post it on the RIC Library Hub!
 - Click on this link <https://soraapp.com/welcome/login/202256>
 - Alternatively you can click on the 'RIC Sora ebooks' link on the Student Channel.



- Log in with your usual computer username (eg, 6jbloggs). Your unique password is your birthday expressed as 4 digits (dddd). For example, if your birthday is on the 4th of the month your password will be 0404, if your birthday is on the 28th of the month your password will be 2828.
 - Explore the website and borrow an e-book or an audiobook.
5. [Best ever books to read during lockdown in 2021](#) kind of speaks for itself! This list from The Independent is one of many out there, but will appeal to older and more voracious readers.
 6. [21 free \(or very cheap\) ways to sprinkle joy for kids over half term](#) From Martin Lewis website - with great ideas from cooking to nature trails to fun in the living room.

This may be the perfect time to have the discussion with your child about their device use and whether or not they are addicted! Do they have *nomophobia* (fear of being without access to a working mobile phone)?

This guide from Compare the Market could be useful; [Complete guide to screen addiction](#)

The website, It's Time to Log Off has a few interesting articles and fun quizzes such as

["Am I ADDICTED to my smartphone?" Quiz](#) to maybe start the conversation on mobile screen time. Of course we are all aware of the irony of both a website asking these questions and school recommending this reading with the current home learning set up - but it is important to have the 'how to switch off' discussions with our teenagers.

Bereavement

A very difficult situation that sadly many of us are facing, is dealing with bereavement. Half term may be an ideal quiet time to think about a lost loved one - or the vacuum of half term may make it too difficult. The Year Office staff and CP Team are able to support in any way we can with coping with bereavements. We have also developed some strong sensitive teaching materials in PSHE on how to cope via [Project Eileen](#). These will be delivered to students in Years 9 and 10 on our return to school.

Half Term might be the time to work on a memory box, or look through old photos for example - when there is no pressure of school learning.

Support

Through the regular contacts we have had with many of you and your children, whether on Google Meets, welfare phone calls or during Parents'/Carers' Consultation Evenings such as yesterday, we are aware of more students finding lockdown harder this time than last summer. Of course the weather and dark afternoons haven't helped with this. Many families, or individuals within families, have experienced some kind of "wobble" during this lockdown. This is a completely natural occurrence and it seems to be almost like a Mexican wave in the way that some had minor or major meltdowns in the first week, some the second, some the third etc etc. The important thing when these happen is to keep school informed, via an email to the Assistant Head of Year or Head of Year and then we can help plan a way forward with your child that helps them cope.

But if this happens over half term, in case you feel at a loss over what to do, these services may be of use;

- [Kooth](#)
- [E-Motion](#)
- [Sleeping tips for the pandemic](#) there are plenty of other support tips on the mind.org website too

There are also a large number of other support services that we have signposted on previous emails (all on the BMS weblink in the second paragraph of this communication).

Support through Training

There is no doubt that for some of us it feels easier to cope with a situation if someone talks through practical strategies rather than always having to read them. With this in mind Brighton and Hove have organised some *free* sessions for families. These are Zoom sessions and you simply have to sign up as below.

Coping with teenagers' emotions

This workshop will look at some of the reasons why teenagers can become emotional and gives some practical suggestions to help you.

9 March 12.30-2pm [Coping With Teenagers' Emotions Workshop Tickets](#)

Reducing family conflict

This two hour workshop will look at why teenagers get into fights and arguments and provide some practical suggestions to help your teen to solve problems calmly.

23 February 12.30-2pm [Reducing Family Conflict Workshop Tickets FEB](#)

23 March 12.30-2pm [Reducing Family Conflict Workshop Tickets MARCH](#)

Should these sessions be oversubscribed, do join the waitlist, as this will let Triple P (the organisers) know that there is further demand to then add extra dates.

Parental Mindfulness Course

Safety Net are hosting a mindfulness course for parents or anyone who works with children. It is via Zoom every Wednesday throughout March, 5.30-7.30pm. You do not need to have practiced mindfulness before.

[Mindfulness A Four Week Course - Part 1](#) This course will help you:

- Learn the skills of meditation
- Improve your concentration and focus
- Manage stress using breath and body awareness
- Recognise, slow down or stop habitual reactions

We all hope that there may be no more than a couple of weeks before students are allowed back in school, but in the meantime we are still having to allay the anxiety our child may feel, or discourage them from meeting up with anymore than one friend at a time.

As soon as we have the information from the Government detailing the expectations for schools, we will work on the planned safe return for students and pass the details to yourselves. What we do know is that after half term there will be at least 2 more weeks of home learning. To help get through this here are a few suggestions of techniques families have tried

- Some families are setting alarms on their child's phone for the start of each lesson
- Others are making sure the internet is entirely switched off at home at night; to encourage good sleep patterns
- Encouraging children to attend the Google Meets. If your child is in KS3 and wary of them, the best one to try first is with the Form Tutor in tutor time. Many of these have been described by parents and carers as bringing joy and a relief to them as the adult as well, when they hear their child's laughter during it!

For now though, may we wish you all a calm and safe half term break for you and your children.

Kind regards,

Ruth King

Deputy Head Teacher