

Dear families,

Now that we are all a full week into distance learning we hope you will agree that we (students, staff, parents & carers) have worked through an incredibly challenging time and, even with a few teething problems, the vast majority of students are producing some excellent work as a result of their learning. We may well have a long way to go, but felt that this first week needed acknowledgement.

We do appreciate that it isn't easy for everyone to manage this work at home. We have Teaching Assistants supporting all of our SEND students on a daily basis via phone calls and the different Year Offices are catching up with many different students and families each day. But sometimes encouraging your child to focus, especially if you are trying to work from home yourself, can prove challenging.


The guidance in this email is not meant to patronise, nor cause offence to anyone, but is there as a reference or a reminder should any of you ever need it. The focus is on mental health and wellbeing - of all within our Blatch community - or Blatch Family as many of you have heard it called.

You may well have plenty of other ideas beyond these, and we have many of these already from your answers to yesterday's survey. We are currently working through them all and will feedback further suggestions.

DAILY STRUCTURE

As human beings we are reassured by structure; a certain amount of 'predictable' in our lives. We have kept this in mind as we set up the programme for your children and many of them will have appreciated having your clear expectations as to when they should be working and when they have downtime. It wouldn't be appropriate for us to give you specific timings for your child's day. Each child is different and each family has different needs.

But the variety suggested here may be useful;

- Start the day with exercise. Many of you will have seen the Joe Wicks 30 minute workout he is streaming on youtube every morning at 9am for students to follow. (A big favourite with Mr Mowforth's family!)
[PE with Joe | Wednesday 25th March 2020](#)
It's been popular with students and parents/carers alike - we'll leave you to work out who is most exhausted by the end of it!
- With some of the school work we are setting we have heard great stories about some children working with each other whilst on social media. Surely something to complain about?! Apparently not, they are using methods such as  Instagram split screen to talk about the work as they are completing it.
- After some school work it may well be worth giving your child some time to think beyond their own horizons. Could they focus on spreading some joy to others? There will be more on this after Easter when we will be setting up further Blatch Challenges, but for now helping by completing some chores at home, writing to family members who you can't visit could work.
- After a further session of school work, give students some time to complete a mental 'warm down', to reflect on their work and what they have learnt, read a book, in this amazing weather sit outside or look out of a window and notice the nature around them.

We know these ideas will not work for all students, but may be worth a go!

We also know we all respond to **HUMOUR & FUN**. If we can keep ourselves and our families laughing, this can help us out through some difficult times. Watching a funny TV show together or sharing an amusing meme will go a long way.

Here are some ideas of silly things to do, all courtesy of [Off the Fence](#) a brilliant local organisation who work with us at school.

- **7 Second Challenge!** (Each family member has 7 seconds to complete each of these challenges – take in turns/do altogether and eliminate if you prefer)
 1. Name 3 films with sequels
 2. Say the 12 months of the year in reverse order
 3. Touch your toes then clap five times
 4. Spell your name out using your arms
 5. Raise your eyebrows up and down 10 times while shouting
 6. Clap 10 times with your feet
 7. Hold your breath and stare intensely without laughing
 8. Name 3 countries that start with 'l'
 9. Name 3 foods beginning with the letter 'h'
 10. Do the Macarena!
 11. Name 3 Brighton landmarks
 12. Name 7 body parts
 13. Stand on one leg and clap
 14. Name 4 words beginning with the letter 'q'
 15. Name 4 dog breeds
 16. Name 3 Disney films with 'The' in the title
 17. Do a squat
 18. Jump 10 times
 19. Touch one foot with one hand 10 times
 20. Do a robot dance!

Or enjoy these videos together, taking on the challenges in some of them as well!

- How observant are you? (find the odd object) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxI30P64Sfk>
- Would you rather...? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CxJueRyhZU>
- Everyone loves pets doing funny things 😊 😊 😊 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BkD2nN5275c>
- Can you spot the 21 changes in this video? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQT1murcNwA>
- Can you rip a hole in a piece of A4 paper big enough to climb through?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8y9i8ag2Wtk>

What we do know is that **CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE**, even beyond our own family, also makes us very content. Community, Service and Kindness are qualities we encourage when the students are at school and we know are skills you have been refining in your children for years.

It is worth them thinking about how something small can make all the difference to someone - we have spoken about this in assembly at school, both this term and before Christmas; discussing the impact of small gestures as well as the concept of 'paying it forward'. Who knows if they remember those assemblies (maybe ask them?!). But even if they don't it would be great to consider ways they can help in the community. We know they shouldn't be going out to socialise with their friends during this period of lockdown - however much they plead to do so - but could they think of something to do for someone in the community?

MINDFUL SCHOOL WORK

This might sound like a contradiction, but the PSHE work that was given to all year groups this week was via [Young Minds](#) and [Mind](#) websites. These links are to the specific pages. Students have come

back to staff with some wonderful ideas on what to do to keep creative, calm and mindful, detailing some fantastic things that they have discovered;

- Learning Greek
- Gardening with Mum
- The joys of cooking
- Tackling the model Hogwarts which has been put off for ages
- Family card games
- Reading the same book as a friend then discussing it
- Focussing on football skills
- Spending time with pets
- Yoga
- Running
- Joke-telling
- Trying to find the good in everything - from someone who knew they needed to work on this!

And obviously we should set the example, so what about the PSHE staff? Ms Auld is Youtubing how to hand strip a border terrier (yep I had to look it up too!), Mr Alexander is growing vegetables from seed, practising guitar and piano, and fixing some garden furniture, whilst Mr Greville has taken up pilates. No further comments needed!

And in case this is not enough, Ms Edge has set up some [BMS Music Boredom Busters](#) for all those of you with a musical interest.

Other places you or your children can look - especially if they are feeling anxious are below. Each organisation has a website full of brilliant coping strategies for when you are feeling anxious, as well as offering free support, including online chats with counsellors

- [Kooth](#) - you can set up a free account
- [Childline 1-2-1 support](#)
- [Brighton & Hove Samaritans](#)
- [The Mix](#)

Also attached to this email are two documents;

- ❑ one from SafetyNet about how to talk to our children about the current situation. This is aimed more at younger children, but is useful for a quick scan even if you children are in Years 10 and 11.
- ❑ One from the NHS again addressing how to have conversations and cope during the Covid-19 pandemic.

ONLINE SAFETY

With such a large reliance on technology for us all during this pandemic you may choose to give your children these resources from CEOP [CEOP ThinkUKnow Activity Packs](#) These packs are age specific, so just click on the appropriate one for your child/ren and there will be a new 15 minute task every fortnight. These can be sent to you via email if you sign up.

HEALTH

And finally, if this hasn't been sent to you already, please download the Covid-19 tracker app [Covid Symptom Tracker](#) to slow the spread of Covid-19 and identify at risk cases sooner through self-reporting your symptoms daily.

Thank you for reading through to the end of these details. Please do feedback any other ideas you have to help our community and we will share these with students.

Wishing everyone good health of mind and body.

Ruth King rking@blatchingtonmill.org.uk