



Headteacher: **Ms Annemari Ottridge** M.Ed. NPQH NPQEL

16th March 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

It's a difficult time and I appreciate that we are all worried about our children, families and friends. Everyone wants to do the 'right' thing and to make sure we have the most up to date knowledge of what is happening and what actions we as citizens might be able to take.

If as parents and carers we don't know what is happening, it is really hard to interact with our children without coming across as anxious or worried. This understandable.

I have found some really helpful thoughts and reassuring information from a World Health Organisation memo dated 12th March 2020 which I thought I should share with you.

Supporting yourself:

'Minimise watching, reading or listening to news that causes you to feel anxious or distressed; seek information only from trusted sources and mainly to take practical steps to prepare your plans and protect yourself and loved ones. Seek information updates at specific times during the day, once or twice. The sudden and near-constant stream of news reports about an outbreak can cause anyone to feel worried. Get the facts; not the rumours and misinformation. Gather information at regular intervals, from WHO website and local health authorities' platforms, in order to help you distinguish facts from rumours. Facts can help to minimize fears.'

'Take care of yourself at this time. Try and use helpful coping strategies such as ensuring sufficient rest and respite during work or between shifts, eat sufficient and healthy food, engage in physical activity, and stay in contact with family and friends. Avoid using unhelpful coping strategies such as tobacco, alcohol or other drugs. In the long term, these can worsen your mental and physical wellbeing. This is a unique and unprecedented scenario for many workers, particularly if they have not been involved in similar responses. Even so, using strategies that have worked for you in the past to manage times of stress can benefit you now. You are most likely to know how to de-stress and you should not be hesitant in keeping yourself psychologically well. This is not a sprint; it's a marathon.'

Supporting your children, family and friends:

'Help children find positive ways to express feelings such as fear and sadness. Every child has their own way to express emotions. Sometimes engaging in a creative activity, such as playing, and drawing can facilitate this process. Children feel relieved if they can express and communicate their feelings in a safe and supportive environment.'

'Maintain familiar routines in daily life as much as possible, or create new routines, especially if children must stay at home. Provide engaging age appropriate activities for children, including activities for their learning. As much as possible, encourage children to continue to play and socialise with others, even if only within the family when advised to restrict social contact.'

Lonsdale School, Brittain Way, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG2 8UT
 Telephone: 01438 726999, email: admin@lonsdale.herts.sch.uk
www.lonsdale.herts.sch.uk



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'During times of stress and crisis, it is common for children to seek more attachment and be more demanding on parents. Discuss COVID-19 with your children using honest and age- appropriate way. If your children have concerns, addressing those together may ease their anxiety. Children will observe adults' behaviours and emotions for cues on how to manage their own emotions during difficult times.'

I found it reassuring to read this advice. I hope it is useful for you and you'll be able to share it with others.

Take care of yourselves, your families and friends.

Warmest wishes

Annemari Ottridge
Headteacher

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