

Parental Support



**St. Margaret Ward Catholic
Academy
April 2020**

Introduction

Supporting your child's well being

Dear parents and carers,

During this difficult time I wanted to reach out to let you know that, even though our school is currently closed to all but a few children, we're still here to support your child and your family in whatever way we can.

You might be noticing signs of increasing anxiety in your child as they're spending more time indoors and outside of their normal routines. These might include:

- Acting out – this might include things like picking fights with you or with siblings or abusing alcohol or drugs
- Becoming afraid to leave the house
- Distancing themselves from their friends and family
- Exhibiting intense emotions but being unable to talk about what they're feeling

We can accomplish great things if we all work together.





We've put together some resources to help you support your child. We hope you find this information helpful.

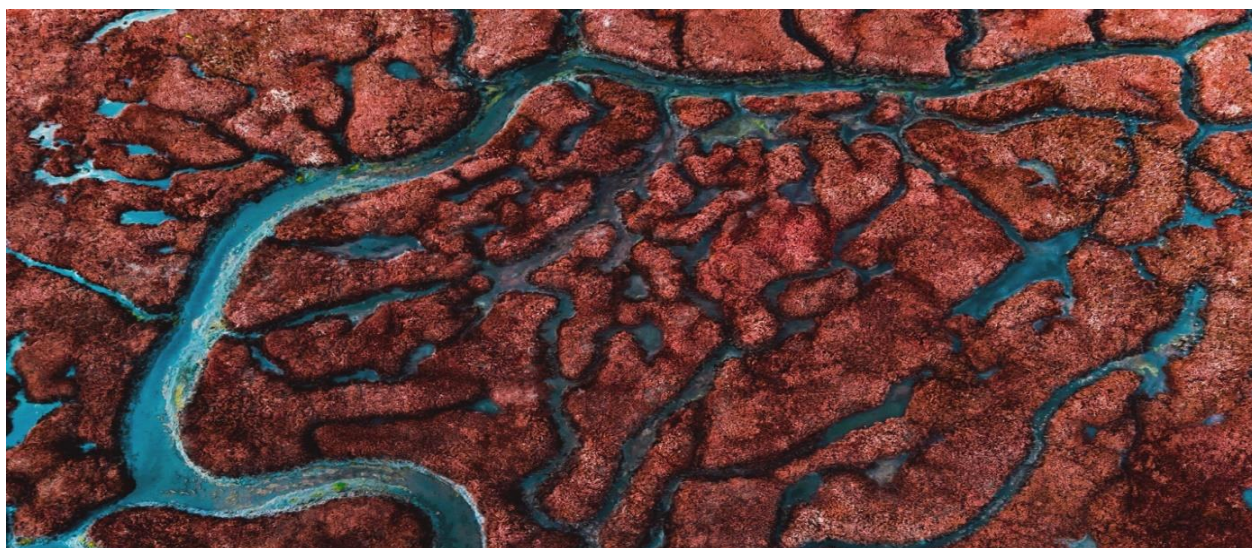
If you have any concerns about how your child is coping or you need any other support from the school, please let us know by emailing me on APonsford@smwca.org.uk

We're extremely grateful for all the support you've shown us as we've adapted to these new circumstances, and we want to reassure you that we at St. Margaret Ward Catholic Academy are still here to support you.

We can and will get through this together.



**DON'T BE PUSHED BY YOUR
PROBLEMS; BE LED BY YOUR
DREAMS**



Take Care of Yourself

It's really important right now to take care of your own physical and mental health. Children are very perceptive, and they react to what they sense from the adults around them.

Here are some things you can do to help keep yourself healthy:

Connect with others – maintain relationships with people you care about through phone and video calls

Exercise – take some time every day to move. You could go for a walk or run. You'll also find lots of fitness videos online for everything from yoga to dance. Find something you enjoy and that makes you feel good

Eat healthy meals – try to keep a well-balanced diet and drink enough water

Get some sleep – being anxious or worried can have a big impact on your sleep. If you're struggling to get a good night's sleep, try to develop a calming bedtime routine – for example, do 10 minutes of yoga or listen to calming music. There are also apps you can download that provide guided meditation to help you get to sleep more quickly

Turn off the news – it's important to keep up to date, but the 24-hour news cycle can make you more anxious. Limit your exposure to the news to only a small amount of time, just enough to know what the latest government guidance is

Do things you enjoy – now that we're all spending more time at home, we can finally take up that hobby we've always meant to learn. Try baking or gardening or learning to knit. These are also great activities we can share with our children

Set goals – it's easy to lose track of the days in our current situation, so it can be helpful to set daily and weekly goals to give us a sense of control and purpose. Examples might be setting a goal of walking for half an hour at least 3 times this week or reading a new book

Connect with the outdoors – depending on where you live, it may not be possible to spend time outside. If you don't have a garden or terrace, you can still open a window to let some fresh air and sunlight in. Put a comfortable chair by the window so you can look outside and get some air as you read a book

Talk to someone – during this difficult time, sharing with family and friends how you're feeling and what you're doing to cope can be helpful for both you and them. There are also helplines you can call for support – we've included a list at the end of this pack



HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING

The tips here are from the article
'Coronavirus: addressing pupil anxiety'

Now matter how calmly you manage the current environment, children are likely to be anxious, so it's important to talk to them about what is happening.

Older children will have the same anxieties about their own health and that of their family and friends as younger children. But they're also likely to feel socially isolated, and worried about the result of school closures on their education and what life will be like after the pandemic is over.

> Deal with the news head-on and talk about it openly and calmly, giving them the facts

- Give them age-appropriate information – take a look at:
 - [BBC Newsround hub](#) – regularly updated with information and advice
 - [Children's guide to coronavirus](#) – a download from the Children's Commissioner to help explain the situation to children
- Teach them how to know if information they find on the internet is reliable. Explain how some stories on social media may be based on rumours or inaccurate information
- Encourage them to take breaks from listening to or reading the news – overexposure isn't helpful.

> Encourage questions

- This will give them the confidence to reach out, if they have anything to ask
- Be reassuring but honest when answering questions – it's ok if you don't have all the answers
- Be ready to answer the same question over and over – children tend to repeat themselves when they're feeling uncertain or worried, so you might have to answer the same questions more than once as they seek extra reassurance

> Be a role model

- Recognise and manage your own worries first
- Be open about your own feelings and let them know it's normal to be concerned – for example, let them know you're also finding the news a bit worrying and what you're doing to stay calm

> Explain how our body's immune system protects us

- It's constantly working against germs without us knowing. We can't and don't need to control this process
- Explain that we're taking precautions against this particular germ because it's a new one which our bodies haven't come across before
- Remind them how important it is that they eat healthy food, sleep and exercise, as this helps to fight germs
- If it helps, reassure them that the effects of this virus on healthy young people are very mild

> Keep doing your bit to help children reduce the spread of germs

- Remind them to maintain good hygiene like bathing daily and wearing fresh clothes
- If younger, encourage them to sing 'happy birthday' twice when they're washing their hands or ensure it is 30 seconds for the older ones.

> Encourage them to maintain social ties – relationships are especially important for older children, so give them room to keep in touch with their friends**> Reassure them** – school will inform with up to date information – exams or return to school.**> Equip them with accurate information** – for example:

- [Mythbusters](#) from the World Health Organization
- [Data visualisation pack](#) from Information is Beautiful (regularly updated)

> Share tools to help them manage anxiety

- YoungMinds: [practical steps to take if you're anxious about coronavirus](#)
- Mind: [how to take care of your wellbeing when staying home](#)



Helplines and websites for children and young people

If your child would like to speak with someone confidentially, there are helplines and websites specifically for them.

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
Shout Free, confidential support via text, available 24/7	Text SHOUT to 85258 in the UK to text with a trained crisis volunteer who'll provide active listening and collaborative problem-solving
The Mix Free confidential telephone helpline and online service that aims to find young people the best help, whatever the problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call 0808 808 4994 for free (11am to 11pm daily) • Access the online community • Email The Mix
ChildLine Confidential telephone counselling service for any child with a problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call 0800 1111 any time for free • Have an online chat with a counsellor (9am to midnight daily) • Check out the message boards



How to make home learning work for your family

We're realistic about what pupils will be able to do during this period, and we want you to be too.

You're not expected to become teachers and your children aren't expected to learn as they do in school. Simply providing them with some structure at home will help them to adapt.

The following tips are designed to help you create a positive learning environment at home. See what works best for your household.

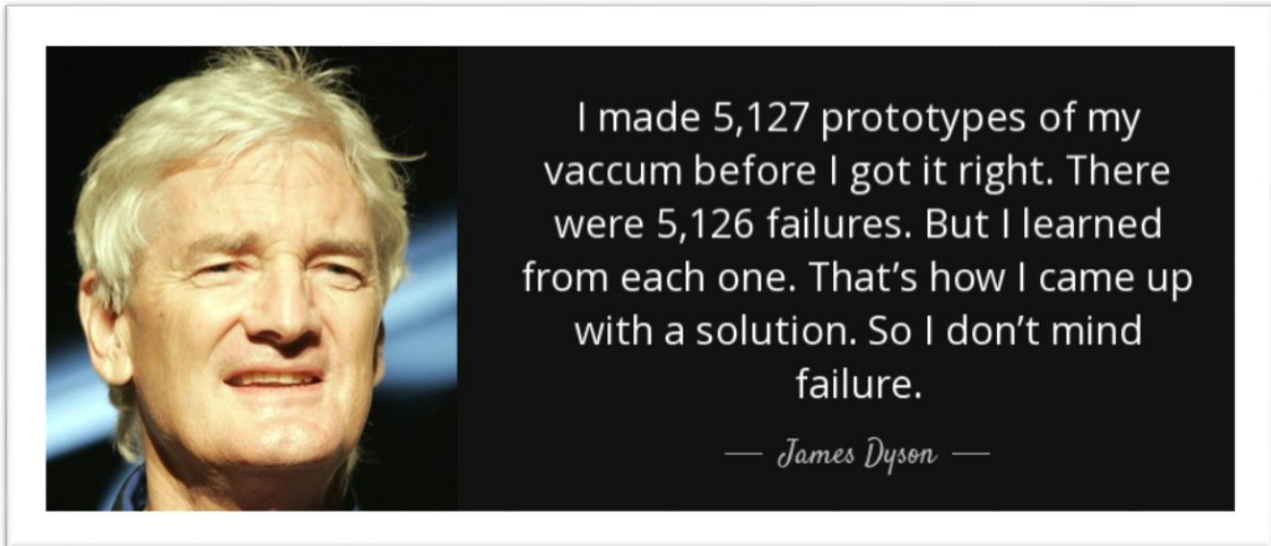
- **Create and stick to a routine** if you can. This is what children are used to. For example, eat breakfast at the same time and make sure they're dressed before starting the 'school' day – avoid staying in pyjamas!
- **Involve your children in setting the timetable** where possible. It's a great opportunity for them to manage their own time better and it'll give them ownership
- **Check in with your children and try to keep to the timetable, but be flexible.** If a task/activity is going well or they want more time, let it extend where possible
- If you have more than 1 child at home, **consider combining their timetables.** For example, they might exercise and do maths together – see what works for your household
- **Designate a working space if possible**, and at the end of the day have a clear cut-off to signal school time is over
- **Stick the timetable up on the wall** so everyone knows what they should be doing when, and tick activities off throughout the day
- **Take stock at the end of each week.** What's working and what isn't? Ask your children, involve them too
- **Distinguish between weekdays and weekends**, to separate school life and home life
- **Give them chores** to do so they feel more responsible about the daily routine at home
- Ask them to **help you cook** and bake
- Accept that **they'll probably watch more TV/spend time on their phone** – that's ok but you might want to set/agree some screen time limits

Please don't worry about your children getting behind with learning. Everyone's in the same boat, and when things get back to normal we'll make sure we get everyone back on track.

Please see the resources available through the school website, and if you require support with this then please get in touch.

Additional strategies to support learning

* **Can you help them to be more resilient** – there is a substantial amount of research that highlights the more independent and resilient students are, the more likely they are to succeed in the future.



This willingness to not give in and think about where their mistake was is so valuable. If you can help them with this, it will be hugely useful going forward. However please be mindful of adding to the stress in the house, and only engage with this at the right time.

* **Go over previous work** – when school resumes, there will of course be support to help the students get back in the ‘swing’ of school. However, we will need to go over the topics covered before the pandemic in order to know where we can start from in lesson. In lessons students would get recap tests and exams on a regular basis to ensure they don't forget the previous knowledge obtained, so if there is a way they can be mindful of this, it will be of benefit. If they can do it on paper, rather than on a digital device, that would be even better!

* **Personal best** – students should only concern themselves with doing their best, not compare themselves to others. If they have some scores, then this is their target to beat, and the challenge can become a bit of a game and link to their resilience mentioned above.

* **Words** – reading during this time is now more important than ever. It also allows more time to try something new – whether a particular author, a book from a film or TV show they have seen, or non-fiction on ‘how to do’ something of interest. In addition, talking is important, having a discussion on something they have seen, heard, read and discussing thoughts/ feelings on this. This practice in communication is crucial as students do talk at school and in a variety of forms – they often address their friends in a very different way from the way they would address staff!

* **Stay in touch** – we are here to help! If you need more work, help with work, to check something, guidance, work in a different form, whatever it is, we will endeavor to help you. It is important more now than ever that we are available to provide support. Please do not be afraid to ask!



Other sites of possible interest

<https://www.economistfoundation.org/?ddownload=7053>

This is a free resource that is child led. It can help with understanding how your child is feeling and what they understand about the current situation.

<https://www.economistfoundation.org/?ddownload=7054>

This looks at numeracy in the media and news concerning the current situation, which helps grasp the situation scale and why such adjustments have been made to everyday life.

<https://www.tes.com/teaching-resources/teacher-essentials/home-learning/secondary>

This is a link to TES which has a host of free resources available during this time. The resources are in all sorts of forms, for all ages and all subjects so feel free to pick something of interest.

<https://www.thenational.academy/>

This is a new site designed especially for the current circumstances. There are lessons, worksheets, and answers available for a range of subjects.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>

This established site now has a new feature – ‘daily lessons’ to support learning at home.

<https://www.taskmaster.tv/hometasking>

Taskmaster; the adult TV show has been particularly creative and created a new “hometasking” activity where they have tasks you can complete at home and have some fun whilst exploring and experimenting.