



**12th May 2020**

Dear Parents/Carers,

**Re: update on possible reopening of schools**

Thank you for your patience while we waited for further information on reopening schools – the government has now published more guidance, and we summarise what we know so far below.

To recap, **if** the government thinks it's safe, schools will reopen from 1 June to reception, year 1 and year 6 pupils.

Over the coming weeks, we'll be creating a detailed plan to make sure we can safely welcome these year groups back, if it's safe for us to start the phased reopening of the school then.

Precautions we'll be taking include:

- Limiting class sizes
- Staggering break times, and pick-up and drop-off times
- Increased cleaning
- Keeping pupils and staff with coronavirus symptoms at home

If your child is clinically extremely vulnerable, or living with someone who is in this group, they should not come back to school and should continue home learning. If your child is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), you should follow medical advice to decide if they should come back to school. Please refer to [government guidance](#) for further details of these groups.

I want to reassure you again that we won't be pressuring parents to send their children to school – you know what's best for your child's health and wellbeing. We'll provide you with more details on the arrangements for reopening in the coming weeks, so you can make the appropriate decision.

Please be reminded that in the meantime, the school is still open **only** for vulnerable pupils and the children of critical workers. Until we're told it's safe to do so, we're unable to provide places for other children.

We'll keep you updated once we know more about when the school will be able to reopen for other year groups. For pupils at home, we'll continue to support you and your child with home learning, and meal support for those eligible.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me via email on [d.lee103@durhamlearning.net](mailto:d.lee103@durhamlearning.net)

Warm regards,  
Donna Lee  
Head Teacher



## 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

No matter how calmly you manage the current environment, children are likely to be anxious, so it's important to talk to them about what's happening.

### **For younger children**

Children pick up bits of information from their friends, from the news and from listening to adults talking around them – but they can misunderstand what they're hearing.

- **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
    - [#covibook](#) – for under 7s
    - [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
  - Encourage them to sing 'happy birthday' twice when they're washing their hands

### **For older children**

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.

In addition to the steps above:

- **Reassure them** that when more guidance comes from the school about how grades will be awarded, you'll share this with them as soon as you have it – you could also check that they understand the information you've received so far, in case there are any points of confusion or worry that the school could help to clarify
- **Encourage them to maintain social ties** – relationships are especially important for older children, so give them room to keep in touch with their friends
- **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](#)

### **If your child struggles with higher levels of anxiety**

Some children are naturally more anxious, such as those with existing phobias or obsessive-compulsive disorders. The current situation can make those anxieties worse.

- Get them to do activities such as counting, ordering and sorting tasks which can help them calm down
- Encourage them to use relaxation techniques such as controlled breathing
- Look out for obsessive or compulsive behaviours and try to get ahead of them early by challenging unhelpful thoughts and assumptions
- If you're worried about your child's anxiety, **YoungMinds** is a charity dedicated to children's mental health. They've opened a [parents' helpline](#) for confidential, expert advice. You can reach them at 0808 802 5544

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

## 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.

## Where to find learning resources online

There's plenty of support for parents online for everything from tools for home learning to PE:

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
<b>BBC Bitesize</b> Online resource for learning and revision. Starting on 20 April, you'll also find daily lessons to support home learning	Website: <a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize">https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize</a>
<b>GoNoodle</b> Movement and mindfulness videos for primary children	Website: <a href="https://www.gonoodle.com/">https://www.gonoodle.com/</a>
<b>STEM.org.uk</b> Free home learning resources for all ages in science, technology, engineering and maths	Website: <a href="https://www.stem.org.uk/home-learning">https://www.stem.org.uk/home-learning</a>
<b>Twinkl</b> This popular site for teachers is now offering free daily activities for home learning	Website: <a href="https://www.twinkl.co.uk/home-learning-hub">https://www.twinkl.co.uk/home-learning-hub</a>
<b>English National Ballet</b> Free ballet classes streamed daily	Website: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/user/enballet">https://www.youtube.com/user/enballet</a>

## Where to turn to for help

It's okay to not be okay. We all need someone to talk to sometimes. If you feel overwhelmed, at risk of abuse or experiencing financial need, there are people you can call on for support:

## Mental health

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
<b>Mental Health Foundation</b> Provides information and support for anyone with mental health problems or learning disabilities	Website: <a href="http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk">www.mentalhealth.org.uk</a>
<b>Mind</b> A mental health charity	Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm) Website: <a href="http://www.mind.org.uk">www.mind.org.uk</a>
<b>PAPYRUS</b> Youth suicide prevention society	Phone: 0800 068 4141 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 10pm, and 2pm to 10pm on weekends and bank holidays) Website: <a href="http://www.papyrus-uk.org">www.papyrus-uk.org</a>
<b>Samaritans</b> Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair	Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline) Website: <a href="http://www.samaritans.org.uk">www.samaritans.org.uk</a>
<b>SANE</b> Emotional support, information and guidance for people affected by mental illness, their families and carers	Website: <a href="http://www.sane.org.uk/support">www.sane.org.uk/support</a>
<b>YoungMinds</b> A charity dedicated to children's mental health	Phone: Parents' helpline 0808 802 5544 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm) Website: <a href="http://www.youngminds.org.uk">www.youngminds.org.uk</a>
<b>Cruse Bereavement Care</b> Support for grief and bereavement	Phone: 0808 808 1677 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5pm) Website: <a href="http://www.cruse.org.uk">www.cruse.org.uk</a>

## Domestic violence

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
<b>NSPCC</b> Child protection charity	Phone: 0808 800 5000 for adults concerned about a child (24-hour helpline) 0800 1111 for children (ChildLine's 24-hour helpline) Website: <a href="http://www.nspcc.org.uk">www.nspcc.org.uk</a>
<b>Refuge</b> Advice on dealing with domestic violence	Phone: 0808 2000 247 (24-hour helpline) Website: <a href="http://www.refuge.org.uk">www.refuge.org.uk</a>

## Community support

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
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<p>Direct to Door Services Nana's Ladles 0191 3711173            Broom House Farm 0191 3718839            Greencroft Milk Supplies 0191 4060406            All Season's Fruit and Veg Via Facebook            Healthy Meal Collection Nettlesworth Community Centre 1-2pm every Tuesday and Thursday for healthy meals collection. This will start Thursday 2nd April. Meals will be chilled or frozen.  <a href="mailto:enquiries@nettleworthcommunitycentre.co.uk">enquiries@nettleworthcommunitycentre.co.uk</a>            T: 0775 7238257            The Fulforth Centre Plans will be with us very soon regarding The Fulforth Centre's healthy meals collection. We will update you as soon as we can.  <a href="mailto:thefulforthcentre@gmail.com">thefulforthcentre@gmail.com</a>            T: 0191 3710601</p>	
<p>FOOD FOR THOUGHT help available to households in the Sacriston Electoral Division            HOW CAN WE HELP... Non-perishable Food Personal Hygiene Baby Supplies Cleaning Products            Key Worker Transport Are you a key worker? Will changes to public transport both now and potentially in the future affect your ability to get to work? Please contact Councillor Simon Wilson.            Shopping Support For anyone who is self-isolating/house bound and does not have a friend/neighbour or relative to provide essential shopping help or collect shopping. We are working on how payment for goods will work. There will be no surcharge for the service, it is only to cover cost of shopping.            Food Parcels/Care Packages This is a free service for anyone who is facing financial hardship and has limited funds.            We can offer... Check in Chat The NHS and the Royal Voluntary Service are working on a centralised system so that anyone who needs to have a chat with someone can. This is not quite in place yet, but will be up and running very soon. In the meanwhile if you need to speak to someone please call and we will try to help.  <a href="mailto:ENQUIRIES@SACRISTONENTERPRISEWORKSHOPS.CO.UK">ENQUIRIES@SACRISTONENTERPRISEWORKSHOPS.CO.UK</a>            T: 07709895493</p> <p>COUNTY COUNCILLOR CONTACTS  <a href="mailto:SWILSON@DURHAM.GOV.UK">SWILSON@DURHAM.GOV.UK</a> - 0300 0268792  <a href="mailto:HEATHER.LIDDLE@DURHAM.GOV.UK">HEATHER.LIDDLE@DURHAM.GOV.UK</a> 0790 0702264</p>	