Supporting your child's wellbeing

Possible signs of anxiety

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:

Pupils ages 4 - 6 years:

- Regressing to behaviour they've outgrown, such as thumb-sucking or bed-wetting
- Showing greater fear at being separated from you
- Tantrums
- Trouble sleeping

Pupils ages 7 - 10 years:

- Expressing sadness, anger or fear
- Sharing false information that they're hearing from their peers or seeing online
- Wanting to talk about coronavirus all the time
- Not wanting to talk about the current situation at all
- Having trouble concentrating

Pupils aged 10+:

- Acting out – this might include things like picking fights with you or with siblings
- 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

Below are 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 contacting the school office admin@stgeorgesce.worcs.sch.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 are still here to support you too.

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 or just put on your favourite music and 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 – a list is included at the end of this pack.
- Be kind to yourself – do what feels right for you and judge don't judge what you're doing by everyone else's actions. Find what works for you.

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.

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
- Further resources are on the health and well-being page of the school website.

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.

If your child struggles with higher levels of anxiety

Some children are naturally more anxious, 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
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
ChildLine Confidential telephone counselling service for any child with a problem	• 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.

Below are some tips which may help you to create a positive learning environment at home. You don't have to do everything on the list, 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 one child at home, consider combining their timetables. For example, they might exercise and do maths together – whatever works for you.
- 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.

On the home learning tab of the website are further ideas and resources for home learning.

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, or experiencing financial need, you can contact school. Alternatively, there are external agencies you can call on for support.

Worcestershire Here2Help

Here2Help is a countywide campaign and community response to provide help and support to vulnerable people and families affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is led and coordinated by Worcestershire County Council, supported by a growing network of individuals, groups and organisations across the county.

It was launched at the start of the pandemic, initially to help vulnerable households who may be self-isolating to access food and medicine – particularly where they don't have available family, friends and neighbours to support them. Increasingly the campaign is also responding to the secondary impact of the pandemic, which in the context of children, young people and families includes issues where:

- The financial situation in a household has changed and parents are struggling to be able to feed their family;
- Parents might be struggling to cope without their usual support networks, to help look after children and keep them entertained (particularly where there may have already been challenging behaviour);
- The isolation and loneliness, accompanied by other issues, are bringing increasing stress and anxiety for children, young people and parents.

How does it work?

Here2Help is about making sure that anyone who is vulnerable during this pandemic is able access the help and support they need to prevent them from getting into crisis. There are three ways this is being done:

1. Providing information, advice and resources to enable self-help wherever possible. On the Here2Help website (http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/here2help) there are a growing number of resources to help families entertain and educate their children, support their mental health, maintain their wellbeing at home, for instance.
2. People can request help by completing the short on-line form on the website or via a dedicated phone number, 01905 768053, which is open from 8am to 8pm seven days a week. Each request which is received is picked up by a WCC or WCF member of staff who then works with the person requesting help to match them to the appropriate information and support. This might be related to access to food and medicine, help and support with childcare and looking after children, community help with money and wellbeing, for instance.
3. People, groups and organisations can also offer help by completing a short on-line form on the website. As of 15th April, there had been 1,359 "offers of help", which are being matched to the requests for help the campaign is receiving.

Mental health

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