

School Closure and Social Distancing: A Survival Guide for Parents

At St Mary Magdalene, we understand the shock of hearing that schools will close their doors for the majority of students from the end of the day on Friday. It is a time of uncertainty and I am sure you are feeling a little anxious about the prospect of an extended period of time without school. I'm sure you have asked yourselves; What will you do with your children? How can you support their learning? What is in place to safeguard their - and your own - wellbeing?

All very relevant questions, which is why we have put together a guide that we hope will support you to support you in navigating this difficult time ahead.

1. Social distancing: What is it and what does it mean for you?

The government has recently advised that we should all now be making an effort to distance ourselves from unnecessary contact with others - social distancing. This measure is an important one in reducing the transmission of Covid-19, and is one that should be followed by everyone. Whilst we are hearing that younger people are statistically less likely to be affected by the virus, this does not mean they are immune from contracting it or more importantly, from passing it on. Therefore, social distancing applies to all of our young people.

Our advice, keep them home!

They may claim their friends are out and about, but be vigilant and strong! The more social distancing that is taking place, the quicker this situation will be over, and the sooner you will be able to send your children back to school.

Inviting friends over to your home, or your child visiting friends' homes is also discouraged, as disappointing as that may be for our young people. Video calls are a great way of friends staying connected and seeing each other, without actually being in the same place!

2. Keeping a Routine

We are creatures of habit and, believe it or not, your children love a routine. Routines keep children regulated; they know what to expect and when to expect it, and this will help ease any bubbling anxiety.

Our advice is to create a structured plan for the day and follow it routinely.

Using the timings of the school day is a good place to start. Below is an example of what a structured day may look like - you can, of course, manipulate the timings to make it fit best with you and your family.

Daily Routine Example:

9:00 - 10:00: English

10:00 - 11:00: Maths

11:00 - 11:30: Free time

11:30 - 12:30: Option choice / project based learning (years 7&8)

12:30 - 13:30 : Exercise

13:30 - 14:00: Free time

14:00 - 15:00: Science

15:00 - 16:00: Life skills (helping with cooking, cleaning, washing)

16:00 - 22:00: Free time

22:00 - 8:00: Bed!

3. What resources will be available for learning?

Teachers at St Mary Magdalene have worked hard to put together a package of remote learning that has been uploaded on to Show My Homework. Along with yourselves, all students have access to this, please do ensure you/they have a log-in [you can contact the office if you do not have this access]. This will be the only way students can communicate with their teachers; please encourage this communication if something is challenging or unclear – teachers will be rigorously monitoring this throughout this period of time. Please note, unless we are aware of internet access issues, students will be expected to submit via online platforms /

show my homework [NB: the tasks and websites will differ from subject to subject]. In addition to this, many education associations have removed subscription charges and are allowing free access to their resources.

Our advice, use these in addition to any work provided by the school.

We recommend the following sites:

- The Literacy Shed (KS3 English and literacy resources)
- The Numeracy Shed (KS3 Maths and numeracy resources)
- The Day (news articles with follow up comprehension and project-type activities)
- Twinkl (a range of English and Maths resources for all key stages)
- The National Literacy Trust (Literacy and Reading resources for all ages)
- Virtual Museum Tours ([click here for link](#))
- The SMM e-library for online books to read and other resources: https://koinoniafederation1-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/Imnatsakanyan_koinoniafederation_com/EuB6ZBixI9BEnuYbBqTar2cBQQ1R2S9TOcGbkvK6QVOVOQ?e=InaAej
- The website and app SCRIBD is offering a **free**, 30 day trial requiring no card details giving access to a range of e-books, audiobooks, magazines and even sheet music if anyone in your household plays an instrument. Listening to an audiobook is a great way for your child- or any family member- to relax, enjoy a fiction/non-fiction text and take a screen break from looking at phones and other technology.

There will be more sites providing educational opportunities - we will endeavour to keep you posted on the best of them.

4. Looking after everyone's wellbeing

This period of time may well present us with more challenges than simply having no lessons to attend. It is very important that we look out for the children's mental health and encourage them to participate in activities that are proven to enhance wellbeing and mindfulness. The government have said that we *are* able to go outside if we are not feeling any symptoms of Covid-19 (no matter how mild) and we are not living with someone who is exhibiting symptoms. So, go for a walk or a run; get some air in the lungs and endorphins running around the body. Team sports are not advised (they are not a good example of social distancing)! If you have any outside space and the weather is fine, encourage your child to sit outside for a bit, or phone a friend outside to get some fresh air. If you are unable to get outside, you could try some meditation, mindful breathing or - if you have space - why not give yoga a try! [there is an abundance of free tutorials on YouTube – please do ensure you are vetting these to check that they are appropriate]. If you're a household that likes music, have a music break, even dance!

Our advice, get children moving!

Students also have a range of agencies that they can get in touch with if their moods become low, or they are in need of extra support. If you notice a change in your child's mood, talk to them about the options they have below:

- Kooth
- Childline
- Young Minds (support available for parents availa, too)

Are you looking after yourself?

In these trying times, please do remember that your health and wellbeing are hugely important, too. You may not be able to follow your well-established routines and you may already be feeling the pangs of anxiety, but please do know that we are here to help as much as possible. Make sure that you have people to talk to - you could join local social media groups to expand your network. Take this opportunity to foster life-long-learning: teach your children skills such as cooking, cleaning and washing - they all need to know how to do this, after all!

Our advice, communicate!

We are a community and we want to support all who are in our community. Get in touch if you need anything!

I am sure this storm will pass and we will emerge stronger. I am also sure that we are in for some challenging times, so hopefully some suggestions in this guide will prove to be helpful.