

COVID-19:

It is an unprecedented time in which we are living and a time of great uncertainty and loss for many. People are impacted by the COVID-19 virus in multiple ways. Students are being impacted with worry about what the virus might bring to them physically, by sporting and other social activities being cancelled and changes in how their schooling is being delivered. Families are making decisions to keep their children home and continue their learning remotely, some have been impacted by losing their jobs and income and we are all learning new rules around social distancing and other changes in our day to day activities.

At school we are facing a most significant change in how we continue to deliver a quality education in ways we have not needed to before. We are aware that not all students have access to a computer or reliable internet and this presents challenges beyond those of trying to navigate online learning. We as a school, and the Department for Education as a system, are looking at ways to best work through this so no child is disadvantaged by their personal circumstances during this pandemic.

I would like to acknowledge the work of our teachers and support staff over the past few weeks. Teachers are being asked to go above and beyond what is normally expected of teachers in schools. It is also important to remember that teachers have their own families, commitments and health considerations to balance with their responsibilities at schools. It is an extremely challenging time and I value and appreciate what our staff are doing to support our families and children. Thank you to the many families who have voiced their appreciation of the way we are working through this time.

Children may be just as scared as you are right now – they are possibly hearing misinformation and correct information and trying to make sense of it. We have never experienced anything like this before, and even when we try to stay calm as adults, children pick up on our stress, anxiety and worry. Children are hearing new words and learning new concepts such as social distancing, pandemic, self-isolation and many more without really understanding what it is all about.

Although having time away from school sounds like fun, this is not the same as regular school holidays. I am not sure that my 3 year old grandson and 6 year old granddaughter (whom I miss a great deal) will understand why they cannot come to stay with their Gran on the chicken farm. (Sorry to Greenslade Chickens, my grandchildren think that my 6 chooks make a farm.) I think the 6 year old, who has autism may have a meltdown or two when she finally understands she will not see me these school holidays.

I know many of our children may get cross with parents and carers who are keeping their children at home in self-isolation. Some children may try to coerce adults into doing what we know they cannot safely do while this pandemic is taking place. What our children need right now is calm reinforcement that we all have to do what we are instructed for now, which is to stay home and be safe. They need adults to reassure them that we will get through this together and they are safe at home.

Remember that every single child in Australia is in this boat and our children will be okay because they have you at home and they'll be supported by us at school.

TAKING CARE OF MENTAL HEALTH:

The COVID-19 pandemic and the necessary disruptions to our normal routines can have a negative impact on our mental health. Here are a range of resources to help.

Headspace

Managing stress related to covid-19 virus includes tips to maintain a healthy mindset:
<https://headspace.org.au/young-people/how-to-cope-with-stress-related-to-covid-19/>
e-Headspace, a free online counselling platform: <https://eheadspace.org.au/>

Kids help line

WebChat counselling:
<https://www.kidshelpline.com.au/get-help/webchat-counselling>
Phone counselling: 1800 55 1800 (free and confidential)

Reachout

Self-care tips: <https://au.reachout.com/collections/self-care>
Professionally reviewed self-help tools-and-apps: <https://au.reachout.com/tools-and-apps>

Youth Beyond Blue

Mental health information:

<https://www.youthbeyondblue.com/>

Online chat forum: <https://online.beyondblue.org.au/WebModules/Chat/InitialInformation.aspx>

Phone counselling service: 1300 22 4636

Blackdog Institute

Dream On – smart phone app trial for young people experiencing sleep difficulties: <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/research/participate-in-our-research/for-young-people/dream-on>

Self-help-tools-apps: <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/getting-help/self-help-tools-apps>

Government search engine for locating information and resources on a range of topics

Sam the ChatBox: <https://headtohealth.gov.au/sam-the-chatbot>

TO SUPPORT LEARNING AT HOME:

- ◆ Start creating a structure and routine for this temporary but “new normal. We don’t know how long this will last, so setting up systems and schedules in the first few days or weeks (and sticking to them as best you can) is much easier than trying to implement them after a prolonged period of unstructured days and late nights.
- ◆ Establish a daily schedule based on your child’s age.
- ◆ Having said this...don’t be scared to throw out the schedule if it’s not working that day, the weather outside is beautiful or your children just need extra love and comfort.
- ◆ Don't worry if you can't explain something or understand something – contact the school or your child’s teacher and we’ll support you.
- ◆ Don't expect your child to sit and concentrate for more than 30-45 minutes at a time, even less for children 8 years or under! Movement or interoception breaks between sit down learning times are a good idea.
- ◆ Make children ‘school like’ lunches, which they can eat during recess and lunch breaks. This makes quite a difference, to the amount of food children will eat during a school day.

At this time, your child’s emotional wellbeing, physical and mental health are more important than their academic knowledge and skills. If the first three aspects are impacted or neglected, it is neurologically impossible for new information and skills to be learnt or remembered. In the months ahead, your child may forget (or even refuse to do!) the learning activities or school work provided by our teachers for supported home learning BUT they will remember the fun new things they learn and do with you – the cuddles while reading, the measuring & counting while cooking, the gardening, the creating, the dancing, the games – and how you made them feel throughout this difficult time.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

If you have questions about COVID-19 and schooling, especially during the school break, go to:<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/supporting-students/health-e-safety-and-wellbeing/covid-19-coronavirus/frequently-asked-questions-about-covid-19-parents-and-carers>

COMMUNICATION ABOUT LEARNING AT HOME:

Please ensure you check the email address you provided to the school. Teachers are using these email addresses to communicate information about how we are setting up home learning from term 2. I wish you all good health and hope you manage to stay safe in these uncertain times.

*Kind regards,
Cheryl Glenie
Principal
1st April 2020*