



Tuesday 19th January 2021

Dear Parent / Carer

Assalaamu Alaikum (Peace Be Upon You)

Thank you for supporting your daughter's learning online. I have seen students making good strides in their progress with remote learning. The dedication of their teachers, support staff and your efforts are making this possible.

Online learning does not replace a classroom setting but continues with pupil engagement and so progress. The current Government guidance is that remote learning will be in place until the end of half term. We will keep you informed as soon as we receive further updates from the Government.

As a reminder, please do support your daughter to:

- take regular planned breaks throughout the day
- have physical breaks with sufficient water, healthy snacks, some exercise, reads for pleasure (Star Readers Challenge)
- try mindfulness or relaxing exercises to develop a healthier and resilient body & mind
- pray regularly
- take timeout with family members, eat together, play games together
- have enough sleep at regular hours, ready and reinvigorated for the next day so that she can continue with sustained effort to ensure her future life success's.
- if you daughter requires extra resources i.e. exercise books, she can request this from her HOY who she will then arrange for her to come in and collect from school reception.

Do read and share the following two documents with your daughter.

- **Helping your child during lockdown**
- **Managing your feelings during lockdown**

The latest Government GCSE updates will be shared with Y10 and Y11 parents in a separate letter.

Thank you again for your understanding and co-operation in supporting your daughter.

Kind Regards,

Sajid Khaliq

Principal





Star

Coping with lockdown and online learning

The decision to move to remote learning will probably have raised a lot of questions and feelings for you. For some of us, it's an exciting opportunity to motivate and challenge ourselves in a different environment. For others, it may be frustrating or cause worry about the disruption to our usual routines.

When we are faced with situations which are new or challenging, we can grow in our resilience. We become more resilient when we face adversity and situations which are on the edge of our comfort zone. As we discover new ways of coping, we develop existing or new skills that we are able to use to help us deal with future challenges.

Here are our five top tips to help you during the next few weeks:

1. Recognise that feelings of anxiety are completely normal. If school closures and news headlines are making you feel anxious, you are not the only one. In fact, that's how most people will feel. Anxiety is a healthy function, which helps us make the decisions we need to, such as not spending time in large groups.

However, sometimes we feel anxious about things we didn't before. This can happen when there is a lot of uncertainty. You may notice you are worrying about things in the past or the future which you have no control over. If this is happening, talk to an adult you trust, such as your parents, carers, siblings or school staff. You can also try mindfulness - www.mindfulnessforteens.com is a really good place to start.

2. Create distractions. Think about separating things into 'things I can control' and 'things I can't control'. There are lots of things we are not responsible for controlling, which can feel really difficult. Try to focus on things such as how you spend your free time – can you learn a new language, grow some plants, create a new exercise routine, or use your creativity to make something new?

3. Find new ways to connect with people. It's natural to miss the connection with people that we rediscovered during the past few months. Think about what works for you – online games, video calls and messaging are all great ways to connect, but see if you can be creative with contacting people too. Are there people you can write to? If the current guidance allows it, can you go for a walk or bike ride with someone? How about contacting local care homes and seeing if their residents would like a letter or a card?

4. Focus on you. Is there something you've been meaning to do for ages? Maybe revise some French nouns, learn all the bones in the body or improve your ballet? The internet can be a wonderful resource for videos to teach you things that you wouldn't have had time to do before. Think about using the time you would have travelled to and from school as your 'you' time. www.beheadstrong.uk has lots of challenges you could try too, as well as ideas to focus on improving your mental health. _

5. Feel your feelings. We can often feel afraid of our feelings – worrying that the difficult feelings will last forever and that we have no control over them. The best way to understand and control them is to feel them. Imagine your favourite sports team lost a match right at the last moment – you’d feel sad or disappointed, and then after a bit you’d feel other things too – the feelings don’t last forever. How we process our feelings is different for everyone. Some people manage their emotions and feelings by talking to someone, by being creative, by helping others or journaling. This can be a helpful way of naming some of our feelings – learn more at www.feelingswheel.com. If you’d like to talk to someone about how you’re feeling, these websites are really helpful too:

- **Childline** – Wellbeing support www.childline.org.uk
- **Kooth** – Online counselling www.kooth.com
- **Alumina** – Self Harm Online Support www.selfharm.co.uk
- **Good Grief Trust** – Bereavement Support www.thegoodgrieftrust.org/find-support/for-young-people
- **Stem4** – Anxiety, Depression and Eating Disorders support www.stem4.org.uk

Finally, please remember that your school is here to support you too. Reach out to your Head of Year or one of your teachers if you’d like someone to talk to.



Star

Helping your child manage their feelings during lockdown

The announcement of the current lockdown and move to remote learning is particularly tough on older children and teenagers. Being deprived of face-to-face contact with their friends, the changes to summer exams and concerns about future job prospects may all contribute to feelings of anxiety for young people.

For many people who thrive on predictability and routine, the uncertain future can feel overwhelming. Reassure your child that they will cope, and that it is always good to experience managing change, as everyone will face many changes throughout their lives.

As always, it is very important to listen to your child without judgement or interruption. Their world was starting to open up again and was suddenly closed down again. The upkeep of vital relationships will be of huge importance to a lot of young people, whether via the phone, online or through gaming.

Help your child to recognise when they are worrying about things which cannot be changed or that they have no control over. They (or you) may notice that they are in a repetitive loop of worry which they may find hard to move away from.

Filling their mind with something to truly distract them from those thoughts can make a huge difference. If they struggle to talk about their feelings, they may find it helpful to write or draw about what is happening to them, or to find a hobby which can keep them engaged mindfully rather than worrying about the past or future.

Here are some suggestions of ways you can support your child over the next few weeks:

- Together, set aside a time each day where they can talk about how they are feeling.
- Focus on things they can control, such as attending all online learning and managing their free time.
- Use journaling (either written, verbal or using art) as a way of processing their thoughts.
- Share your strategies for what helps you when you feel stressed or anxious.
- Take time to be outside – a walk in nature, a bike ride or other outdoor activities are a good way of getting physical exercise and unwinding.
- Think about what you can celebrate – not just birthdays but achievements you have each made such as meeting a target or completing a piece of coursework.
- Include your child when supporting neighbours or family members. Although it may not be possible to see friends in person, help them to connect with others regularly.
- If your child is feeling anxious, encourage them to try simple breathing techniques such as breathing in for a count of four, holding their breath for a count of four and breathing out slowly for a count of seven.

Finally, please remember that your child's school is here to support you too.