



Friday 22nd January 2021

Dear parents,

How are you all this week? I hope that despite the stormy weather, there have been a few brighter moments for you this week? In school, alongside working with our fabulous critical worker children, we have been preparing to roll out twice weekly covid testing to all staff. This is something that the Government has now asked all settings to do. It is good to be adding to our toolkit of control measures in school.

For me, I felt another lovely moment was hearing Amanda Gorman read her inaugural poem, 'The Hill We Climb.' I was particularly touched and inspired by the closing lines, '**For there is always light, if only we are brave enough to see it, if only we are brave enough to be it.**' So on that note, I want to start this letter by focusing on pupil wellbeing.

Through our own experiences and observations, as well as feedback from parents we are aware that many of our children are finding this period of time difficult. I understand that families are working hard to protect children by keeping life as normal and positive as possible. Yet, the reality is, it is hard not being together in school and not what we want to be doing. For some of our children, no matter how happy and balanced they normally are, emotions are running high and sudden 'big' feelings can be so overwhelming for them. I wonder if you recognise your child/ren in this description?

We have reflected on the things we can do at school to help children and families through this time and these difficult emotions; below are our starting points and the framework we have created to work within. We will:

- help to provide structure through routines in learning opportunities,
- help to provide times for children to see their friends socially through registrations and lessons,
- offer a range of learning tasks that can help to focus children's minds on something positive and meaningful,
- enable the focus on Friday to be wellbeing, creativity, sport and nurture (not that this cannot happen every day of course!),
- offer flexibility through direct communication with parents around these tasks and
- support families with home-learning through the Friday 'parent clinics.'

However, we know this will not be enough, so in addition, we thought we could share some of the wellbeing ideas that we use from time to time in school. The ideas are not magic wands and all take commitment and perseverance but they can work! I know some SBS parents are already using many strategies like this, so hopefully our ideas will add to your collection. **I will add different ideas each week. (Please also use the wellbeing packs we have already sent home!)**

Ideas for this week: using positive affirmations

Use phrases such as, 'I believe in my dreams,' 'I learn from my mistakes,' 'I am enough, I am me!' 'My ideas are unique.' Talk about what these phrases mean and find examples in your child's life that reflect

these statements. Choose a statement and make an affirmation badge to wear. Use it as a visual reminder of all your child's strengths when times are hard.

Journals (for older children)

A reflective practice, without boundaries or expectations of other writing tasks. It provides children with a way of processing and exploring their ideas and feelings. This article provides useful tips about the practice of journaling:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/family/2020/05/why-your-child-needs-to-start-journaling-now>

I know that I have spoken about this so many times now but the more we help our children to practice 'self-compassion' the more anchored they will feel. This is why we made 'kindness' our Special Me Day focus this year. Unlike other emotions, self-compassion is not reliant on other people, it is purely our own sense of self-worth and making this as strong as possible, makes children stronger to the ups and downs of life.

Partnership 'problem-solving' clinics

Now that we are a couple of weeks into remote learning, we would welcome the opportunity to talk to parents openly and constructively about our virtual provision. We believe that creating the very best education for all of our children is an iterative process that requires dialogue and problem-solving and right now, more than ever, we need to talk about what this looks and feels like at home. What works well for you at home? Is there something you'd like to see more of? Which elements of home learning do you dread? Do common threads recur in parent discussions?

If you feel you could contribute collaboratively to a discussion with positive outcomes for pupils and families, please come to an informal virtual meeting on **Wednesday 27th January 6.30-7.45pm**

The code for this meeting will be 'partnership' and you should login using GoogleMeets.

Depending on the number of parents we will then split into smaller groups.

Please do come - we are so keen to work in partnership with you regarding this.

The release of Arbor Parent Portal

In September we migrated to a new 'pupil data management system.' This new system provides us with many new advantages and one being that we can release access to you. This will mean that you can see and amend contact details for your family *and see the positive reward points that your child is being awarded with in their daily lessons.* We are continuing to award explorer points, SBS values and SBS manners points throughout this period of school closure.

You will shortly receive a letter explaining how you can access this parent portal - it is very straightforward! If you do login and make changes, we are alerted and can authorise changes our end. Fingers crossed this system will be efficient and provide immediate positive feedback to parents!

Again, wishing you all a peaceful weekend.

Warm regards
Anne Moir