



Headteacher: Niall Smith M.A. (Cantab), N.P.Q.H.

Deputy Headteachers: Brian Burns B.A. (Hons), N.P.Q.H. — Craig Wicking B.Sc. (Hons), N.P.Q.H.



Dear Parents and Carers,

Re: Looking after the well-being of our Sixth Form community.

As we emerge from Lockdown, I wanted to reach out to let you know that, even though our school is currently opening to Year 12s on a very limited basis, we're still here to support your son/daughter and your family in whatever way we can.

You might have noticed signs of increasing anxiety in your son/daughter as they're spending more time indoors and outside of their normal routines. These might include:

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

We've put together some resources to help you support your son/daughter. We hope you find this information helpful.

If you have any concerns about how your son/daughter is coping or you need any other support from the school, please let us know.

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.

We can and will get through this together.

Kind regards,

The Sixth Form Team





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INFORMATION FOR WELL BEING

Take care of yourself

It's really important right now to take care of your own physical and mental health. Teenagers are very perceptive, and they react to what they sense from the adults around them.

Here are some things you can all 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. 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 – we've included a list at the end of this pack.

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How to talk to your son/daughter about what's happening

No matter how calmly you manage the current environment, your son/daughter is likely to be anxious, so it's important to talk to them about what's happening.

Teenagers will have the same anxieties about their own health and that of their family and friends as younger children. But they're also likely to feel socially isolated, and worried about the result of school closures on their education and what life will be like after the pandemic is over.

In addition to the steps above:

- **Reassure them** by checking that they have understood the information so far about Covid.
- **Encourage them to maintain social ties** – relationships are especially important for teenagers, so give them room to keep in touch with their friends
- **Equip them with accurate information** – for example:
 - [Mythbusters](#) from the World Health Organization
 - [Data visualisation pack](#) from Information is Beautiful (regularly updated)
- **Share tools to help them manage anxiety**
 - YoungMinds: [practical steps to take if you're anxious about coronavirus](#)
 - Mind: [how to take care of your wellbeing when staying home](#)

If your son/daughter struggles with higher levels of anxiety

Some teenagers are naturally more anxious, such as those with existing phobias or obsessive-compulsive disorders. 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 son/daughter'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

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Helplines and websites for children and young people

If your son/daughter would like to speak with someone confidentially, there are helplines and websites specifically for them.

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
<p>Shout Free, confidential support via text, available 24/7</p>	<p>Text SHOUT to 85258 in the UK to text with a trained crisis volunteer who'll provide active listening and collaborative problem-solving</p>
<p>The Mix Free confidential telephone helpline and online service that aims to find young people the best help, whatever the problem</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call 0808 808 4994 for free (11am to 11pm daily) • Access the online community • Email The Mix
<p>ChildLine Confidential telephone counselling service for any child with a problem</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

- **Create and stick to a routine if you can. This is what teenagers 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!
- **If you have more than 1 child at home, consider combining their timetables.** For example, they might exercise and do a subject at the same time – see what works for your household
- **Designate a working space if possible, and at the end of the day have a clear cut-off to signal school time is over**





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- **Take stock at the end of each week.** What's working and what isn't? Ask your son/daughter, involve them too
- **Distinguish between weekdays and weekends, to separate school life and home life**
- **Give your son/daughter 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

Where to find learning resources online

Individual subject teachers will have provided your son/daughter with useful websites. The 6th Form noticeboard on google Classroom is updated daily with opportunities for co-curricular 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, at risk of abuse or experiencing financial need, there are people you can call on for support:

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
PAPYRUS Youth suicide prevention society	Phone: 0800 068 4141 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 10pm, and 2pm to 10pm on weekends and bank holidays) Website: www.papyrus-uk.org
Samaritans	Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline) Website: www.samaritans.org.uk





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Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair	
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

Domestic violence

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
NSPCC Child protection charity	Phone: 0808 800 5000 for adults concerned about a child (24-hour helpline) 0800 1111 for children (ChildLine's 24-hour helpline) Website: www.nspcc.org.uk
Refuge Advice on dealing with domestic violence	Phone: 0808 2000 247 (24-hour helpline) Website: www.refuge.org.uk

