**BUTTERCUP PRIMARY SCHOOL COVID–19: April 2020**

**ADDENDUM to Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy**

# **Context**

Buttercup Primary School has an effective Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy in place. However, this policy may or may not accurately reflect new arrangements in response to COVID-19, which can constantly change over time.

From 20th March 2020, parents were asked to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and schools were asked to remain open only for those children of workers critical to the COVID-19 response who could not be safely cared for at home.

Schools and all childcare providers were also asked to provide care for children who are considered to be vulnerable.

Buttercup Primary School recognises that taking care of your physical and mental health is crucial currently: this goes for children, parents and all staff. Keeping minds active and happy, ready to return to school when the time comes is the most important factor.

This COVID-19 addendum summaries any key COVID-19 related changes to the regular Buttercup Primary School Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy for Pupils, Parents and Staff.

# **Pupils: Expectations**

The current situation may affect both pupils' and parents' mental health. Staff will need to bear this in mind when setting expectations for the work pupils do at home. Buttercup Primary School will have support in place for children on site too, which will draw on your existing provision, and specialist support.

Buttercup Primary School has created an addendum to its Home Learning Policy to address potential concerns regarding home learning expectations in this unprecedented time. Buttercup Primary School suggests a maximum of two to three hours of home learning per day is plenty and will keep minds active but enthusiastic. Getting children to help with household activities such as washing, cooking and gardening are educational, as is watching some “good” TV or online streams, such as documentaries and drama. For more information, please see the COVID-19 addendum to the Home Learning policy.

The children still attending school will not be accessing the curriculum as normal. A schedule of fun, educational experiences will be organised for those children to take part in, which will also include some time to complete the home learning tasks that most of the children are completing at home.

## Addressing pupil anxiety

Younger and older children need to be supported to help keep on top of coronavirus-related worries. Anxiety is rooted in the unknown. Buttercup Primary School will urge pupils to talk about their worries, whether at home or at school, by encouraging open conversations and giving families facts and practical steps about what they can do to alleviate concerns or worries.

When talking to children, staff and/or parents should:

* + 1. Deal with the news head-on and talk about it openly and calmly, giving them the facts:
       - Give them age-appropriate information – take a look at:
         * [BBC News round hub](https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51204456) – regularly updated with information and advice
         * [#covibook](https://www.mindheart.co/descargables) – for under 7s
       - Educate them about reliable sources of information and how some stories on social media may be based on rumours or inaccurate information
       - Encourage them to take breaks from listening to or reading the news – overexposure isn't helpful
    2. Encourage questions:
       - This will give them the confidence to reach out and ask, if they have anything to ask
       - Use comforting tones and be honest when answering questions – it's ok if you don't have all the answers
       - Allow for repetition – children tend to repeat themselves when they're feeling uncertain or worried, so you might have to answer the same questions more than once as they seek extra reassurance
    3. Be a role model:
       - Recognise and manage your own worries first
       - Be open about sharing this with pupils – e.g. I'm also finding the news a bit worrying, so I'm doing X which makes me feel calm
    4. Let them know it's normal to be concerned:
       - If needed, reassure them that the effects of this virus on healthy young people are very mild
    5. Promote awareness of our body's immune system:
       - It's constantly working against germs without us knowing. We can't and don't need to control this process
       - Explain that we're taking precautions against this particular germ because it's a new one which our bodies haven't come across before
       - Remind them of the benefits of healthy eating, sleep and exercise – which help to fight germs
    6. Be aware of children with higher levels of anxiety (e.g. those with existing phobias or obsessive-compulsive disorders):
       - Get them to do activities such as counting, ordering and sorting tasks which can help with heightened levels of anxiety
       - Encourage them to use relaxation techniques such as controlled breathing
       - Detect any obsessive or compulsive behaviours early and intervene before they become entrenched patterns of thinking. Do this by challenging unhelpful thoughts and assumptions. Frame worries as situation-specific by relating them to the current situation, which is temporary and unusual
    7. Keep doing your bit to help children reduce the spread of germs:
       - Use posters to remind pupils/children how and when to wash their hands
       - Encourage them to sing 'happy birthday' twice when they're washing their hands

As well as the concerns we're all feeling right now, older pupils are likely to also be worried about their SATs and life after primary school.

Parents and staff need to reassure them that more guidance will come and that we will share any news with them as soon as we have it.

In the meantime, adults can equip the older children with the resources below:

* YoungMinds: [practical steps to take if you're anxious](https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/) about coronavirus
* Mind: [how to take care of your wellbeing](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing) if you need to self-isolate

These resources can help to dispel myths:

* [Mythbusters](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters) from the World Health Organization
* [Data visualisation pack](https://informationisbeautiful.net/visualizations/covid-19-coronavirus-infographic-datapack/) from Information is Beautiful (regularly updated)

Sources for these top tips:

The Key

Catrin Harley from the local authority Psychology Services

[Talking about coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html) - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [How to talk about scary world news](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/talking-to-your-children-scary-world-news) - Mental Health Foundation

## Free resources for talking to pupils/children

Buttercup Primary School encourages all parents, carers and staff to be honest and transparent with pupils/children when talking to them about coronavirus. The following resources can be used:

* BBC Newsround's regular updates on coronavirus (suitable for younger children). [This overview piece](https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51204456) includes:
  + What governments are doing about COVID-19
  + What the common symptoms are
  + A video of answers to childrens’/pupils' questions
  + [See here](https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround#more-stories-2) for all coronavirus updates from BBC Newsround
* [Mythbusters](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters) from the World Health Organization (suitable for older children)
* [5 facts](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/share-facts.html) about COVID-19 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention(suitable for older children)
* [Data visualisation pack](https://informationisbeautiful.net/visualizations/covid-19-coronavirus-infographic-datapack/) from Information is Beautiful (suitable for older children)
* [NHS common questions](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/common-questions/) on COVID-19 (suitable for older children)

In addition, parents will find a great deal of ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistance) resources available on our website www.buttercupprimary.co.uk in the Home Learning Resources section.

## **School closure**

Pupils/children will find the school closure unsettling. Buttercup Primary School have done and will continue to do the following:

* Be honest with pupils and give them the same up to date information tailored in a way the pupils and children will understand
* Acknowledge to them that these are uncertain times for everybody
* Take any questions they have and answer honestly – it is ok if the school does not have all the answers
* Let them know what's going to be expected of them if the school closes, such as:
  + How they will complete work/home learning
  + Explain how they can use a remote learning platform
* Encourage parents to speak about the situation with their children

# **Parents**

## **Expectations**

Buttercup Primary School recognise that many parents are also trying to work from home and parents might struggle to assist with schoolwork for a number of reasons. Parents will not be expected to become teachers.

In addition, Buttercup Primary School recognises that single parent families will struggle more to balance competing demands with schoolwork, while families with pre-school children will spend more time interacting with and supervising children.

The mental health of parents and carers is at the forefront of the staff’s minds during this unprecedented time and the school will ensure that ways of communication between the school and parents and carers are always open to enable the important partnership of the school and its parents and carers to continue.

## How to support home learning

Please read our detailed COVID-19 addendum to our Home Learning Policy for in-depth advice on your child’s home learning; however the following tips act as guide to ensure your health and wellbeing as parents is not compromised during this time with regard your child’s home learning:

* + - Be realistic about what you can do:
      * **You're not expected to become teachers** and your children aren't expected to learn as they do in school. Simply **providing your children with some structure** at home will help them to adapt
      * **Experiment** in the first week, then **take stock.** What's working and what isn't? Ask your children, involve them too
      * **Share the load if there are 2 parents at home.** Split the day into 2-3 hour slots and take turns so you can do your own work
      * **Take care of your own health and wellbeing.** This will be new for your entire household, so give it time to settle. Take a look at the links at the end of this factsheet for some advice on your own mental health and wellbeing
    - Keep to a timetable wherever possible:
      * **Create and stick to a routine** if you can. This is what children are used to. For example, eat breakfast at the same time and make sure they're dressed before starting their day – avoid staying in pyjamas!
      * **Involve your children in setting the timetable** where possible. It’s a great opportunity for them to manage their own time better and it’ll give them ownership
      * **Check in with your children and try to keep to the timetable, but be flexible.** If a task/activity is going well or they want more time, let it extend where possible. If you have more than 1 child at home, **consider combining their timetables**. For example, they might exercise and do maths together – 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 home learning time is over
      * **Stick the timetable up on the wall** so everyone knows what they should be doing when, and tick activities off throughout the day
      * **Distinguish between weekdays and weekends**, to separate home learning days and the weekend.
    - Make time for exercise and breaks throughout the day:
      * **Start each morning with a** [PE lesson](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLyCLoPd4VxBvQafyve889qVcPxYEjdSTl) at 9am with Joe Wicks
      * If you have a **garden, use it regularly**. If you don’t, try to get out **once a day** as permitted by the government (households can be together outdoors but 2 metres apart from others)
      * Get your children to **write in a diary what they did each day** – this can be a clear sign that home learning time has ended
    - Other activities to keep children engaged throughout the day:
      * Where you have more freedom in the timetable, **make time for other activities**. Add some creative time or watch a dance video
      * Get your children to **write postcards** to their grandparents or to pen pals
      * Ask **grandparents to listen to your children read** on FaceTime (or ask grandparents to read to younger children)
      * **Give them 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

Remember, Buttercup Primary School suggests a maximum of two to three hours of home learning per day for primary-age children is plenty and will keep minds active but enthusiastic.

## **Contacting the school**

If you need to contact the school for any reason, please use the following methods of communication and we will do our best to support and help you:

* + - **Email**: Please email [info@buttercupprimary.co.uk](mailto:info@buttercupprimary.co.uk) with any general queries and questions or if you require any help and support
    - Visit our **website** www.buttercupprimary.co.uk and look at the parents section for helpful advice and support. In addition, the children section is where you will find the Home Learning Resources for your child to complete
    - Use your **2simple to** log in to communicate with your child’s class teacher
    - Keep an eye on ourschoolapp notifications for all communications sent to parents and carers. All communications are also displayed on the Latest News section of our website.
    - **Telephone** the school office on 0207 759 7408 The office is currently manned with only one member of staff so you call may not be answered if the member of staff is already on another call, but please keep trying.

## **Mental Health links for Parents**

Please visit the following links for guidance on supporting your mental health and that of your children:

[Coronavirus and your wellbeing](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing) – Mind.org

[Supporting young people’s mental health during this period](https://www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/anna-freud-learning-network/coronavirus/) – Anna Freud Centre

# **Staff**

## **Expectations**

In this unprecedented time, parents cannot expect that their children will be accessing a normal curriculum timetable or individual support on a regular basis.

Buttercup Primary School recognises that its school leaders and staff are working extremely hard under difficult circumstances to keep the school open for vulnerable pupils and those pupils who have parents and carers that are critical workers and to keep learning happening for all pupils.

Buttercup Primary School expects teachers’ workload not to be increased during this period and for all communication and workload to be negotiated and agreed with the Senior Leaders. It is not necessary for teachers to have daily interaction with pupils and parents. Teachers who are working will be focusing on the children in their care and/or working from home on resources.

Parents should not expect that teachers and staff will respond to or contact their pupils daily. Exceptions to this will be where the Headteacher has agreed with particular staff members to regularly contacting vulnerable children and families, but this will not be limited to one person.

## **School staff resilience and mental health & wellbeing**

In this unprecedented time, it is vital to ensure that every staff member looks after themselves and their families first and foremost to enable our critical work to continue.

The proprietors recognise that staff and pupil wellbeing is central to the day to day working of the school. The commitment and dedication of all staff and the inventive ways the senior leadership team has found to ensure that learning continues within and outside school, safeguarding is paramount for all staff and pupils, supporting our most vulnerable families continues, supporting staff wellbeing continues; provides normality for all and is nothing short of extraordinary.

Staff should be encouraged to visit the free mental health and resilience tools via the Tower hamlets Council portal or by accessing the following link <https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schools-resilience/resilience-staff-tools>

In particular there is the free 24/7 [confidential counselling and support](https://extra.hants.gov.uk/employee/policy-guidance/occupational-health/employee-support) service phone line to employees and their families (you will need your personnel number to access this). This resource can be reached by telephoning 0800 030 5182.

Buttercup Primary School has a comprehensive (SIAMS report 2019) staff health and wellbeing package. During the COVID-19 period it is important for as many of these components to continue to ensure the health and wellbeing of all staff is at its highest level. For example, staff are encouraged to keep the Secret Samaritan scheme going whilst school is not open as usual.

The senior leaders and line managers are responsible to ensure weekly check-ins with their teams take place. Regular contact with Head Teacher is also encouraged by each member of staff.

## **Staff illness**

It is crucial that any member of staff that either has symptoms of COVID-19 or is in the same

household of anyone that is displaying symptoms of COVID-19, informs the Headteacher immediately and self-isolates, along with all members of their household for 14 days. This is to safeguard others at school and the general public.

If a member of staff has an underlying health condition, they will need to social distance themselves from the school building and remain at home for a period of 12 weeks and heed to government advice.

Staff that are either social distancing or are self-isolating and who are not displaying symptoms can continue to work from home and send their work log of hours to their line manager at the end of each week.

Staff who are unwell and/or who are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 should not work at home and ensure all their efforts are used to rest, recuperate, recover and get well.

If there are any changes to your health, please inform the Headteacher in the first instance, so that your absence can be recorded correctly.

Buttercup Primary School is operating a skeleton-staff rota system to ensure the school building and critical worker care is staffed accordingly. The mental health and wellbeing of staff is paramount to the Senior Leaders, especially during this unprecedented time, and therefore the school will be as flexible as possible to ensure a minimum number of staff are asked to leave home and come into work to become Critical Workers.

# **Summary**

Buttercup Primary School recognises that taking care of your physical and mental health is crucial at this time: this goes for children, parents and all staff. Keeping minds active and happy, ready to return to school when the time comes is the most important factor.

For general information regarding the COVID-19 situation please refer to:

* + - [COVID-19: guidance for educational settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19), GOV.UK – Public Health England and Department for Education
    - [COVID-19: stay at home guidance,](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance) GOV.UK – Public Health England