

## Principles for Home-schooling

(adapted from a document circulated by the DECP, with thanks)

- Schools have not 'shut down' – Although most children will not be able to physically attend school you will still be able to communicate with senior leaders or, in some instances, teachers.
- It won't be possible to replicate a full school timetable. Giving yourself and your children permission to accept this can be a big weight lifted.
- Know when to take a break. Sometimes your child will need one, and sometimes you will - this is fine!
- Expect stress – This is an uncertain and unpredictable situation, stress and anxiety are normal.
- Reassure children – Children can sometimes believe they are responsible for things that are beyond their control. Reassure children that it is the adult's job to make sure things are OK and to keep them safe.
- Help children stay connected to their friends – Friendships are a key resiliency factor for children and young people. Is it possible for children to talk to their friends on the phone? Perhaps establish a group Skype or WhatsApp call? Perhaps they could write letters to each other?
- Normalise the experience – Reassure children that lots of adults and other children are in the same situation.
- Have a routine and structure – Having a plan and a predictable routine for the day can be very reassuring. As adults we like to know what is going to happen, and children like this too. A consistent routine lets everyone be secure about the plans for the day. It is often useful to involve children in creating this routine, so that they feel part of the plan, rather than the plan being imposed on them. You could display the routine using a timeline, or maybe pictures and visuals. Encourage children to develop independence by referring to their own routine/plan themselves.
- Don't worry if the routine isn't perfect – Remember, this isn't a normal situation. If you find that planning and sticking to the routine is causing more stress, friction or conflict, then it's OK to be more 'free-flow'. Perhaps be guided by the activities that children want to do.
- Think about and agree 'The Rules' together, perhaps by using the Family Rules handout from the Hebden Royd website.

- Avoid putting too much pressure on academic work – Most parents and carers aren't teachers and so it's OK not to be doing 'school work' for six hours a day. It might be more important to be spending time together, building relationships, enjoying shared activities and reassuring children, as opposed to replicating the school timetable.
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes, and draw attention to them when you do - show your child that it's okay to get things wrong.
- Keep a simple log or diary of the activities you have done - this will be helpful for your planning, useful when your child returns to school, and reassuring when you look back over it and realise all the things you have managed to achieve.
- Use 'yet'. If your child says that they 'can't do' something just add the word 'yet' - it can really change how you and they feel about the situation.
- Try to keep work in one place – If children are doing school work or project work at home, try to keep it all in one place so that it doesn't spread out over the house. This can help to maintain a work/home boundary. We know that people live in different circumstances that might mean this isn't always possible, so perhaps there might be other ways to 'signal' the end of working e.g. putting away the work and then enjoying a favourite song or shared dance!
- Reduce access to rolling news – It is important to keep up to date with new developments and announcements, but it can be hard to switch off from the constant stream of news from media outlets and social media. Reduce the time spent hearing, reading or watching news.
- Supervise children with screens – Try to ensure all children have a balanced range of activities each day. Involve children and young people in these discussions so that they feel part of the plan (NB - screentime is fine - but too much screentime can cause problems)
- Provide reassurance about exams being cancelled – Young people may now be concerned about the announcement that exams later this year will not be going ahead as planned. They may feel like all their hard work has been for nothing.
- Play – Play is fundamental to children's wellbeing and development – children of all ages! It's also a great way to reduce stress in adults.