

# Promoting Pupil Wellbeing when School is Online



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# Introduction

As many schools and colleges move once more to online learning for students, this guide looks at some of the simple steps that we can take to protect the mental health and emotional wellbeing of pupils.

These ideas can be used both with entire classes / year groups who are accessing learning remotely and also individual groups or bubbles who are having to self-isolate.

I hope it's helpful, thank you for all you are doing.

Good Luck!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pooky". The script is cursive and fluid, with a large 'P' and a long, sweeping underline.

Dr Pooky Knightsmith  
Director  
Creative Education



For us, the focus is on making  
sure that our school still feels  
like a community – that is what  
makes us great in normal  
times







# Open & Honest



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There is much uncertainty right now and that is unsettling for everyone, but by developing a culture of openness and honesty where we share clear plans about what could happen next, everyone will feel somewhat reassured. Students, staff and families should be prepared for the possibility of changes and challenges ahead including changes to the tier system and potential periods of isolation even for those currently learning face to face.

Once you have a plan, ensure that it's communicated clearly with students, staff and families

Reassure everyone with brief regular updates, even when things haven't changed

Ensure that every family is reached by someone, somehow – a brief audit will quickly identify gaps

**Consider**





# Offer Reassurance

Some children may worry deeply about how safe they or their family and friends are. It's important to teach children in an age and stage appropriate ways about why isolation or lockdown is occurring that it is largely a preventative measure. However, this is also a good time to remind children about safe practice to limit the spread of the virus. Be prepared to answer questions and explore the topic, offering reassurance and reminders as appropriate.

Work together with families to create consistent messages and practice



## Consider



Share links to helpful resources and child friendly FAQs that may reassure

Talk to children in an age and stage appropriate way about the science behind the virus and vaccinations; it's a great and relevant learning opportunity



# Routine...

One of the most helpful things that we can do to protect our mental health and promote our wellbeing is to have a daily routine. For this reason, school is a great protective factor against mental illness as it forces us to get up, get clean and get out every day as well as providing a sense of belonging, purpose and connection. Unless we plan to maintain these factors, they can easily fall away when a child is not attending school. A helpful and practical thing to do is to create a 'wellbeing action plan' which considers our daily routine and the things we'll commit to doing and those we'll avoid doing each day, in order to keep ourselves well.

Consider the routine of remote school, a few anchors such as a regular assembly can help people feel less adrift



Encourage families to support children in sticking to regular routines around waking, sleeping, eating and physical activity

**Consider**



Encourage all staff and students to create a wellbeing plan - Headstart Kernow have a great online tool for this:

[startnowcornwall.org.uk/wellbeing-action-plan/](http://startnowcornwall.org.uk/wellbeing-action-plan/)



# Stay Connected



Loneliness and lack of connection is something that many children say they find difficult during lockdown. For many there is also a lack of direction and purpose when they aren't able to engage with school or hobbies. It's important, therefore, that we consider how to maintain a sense of connection for students and staff when learning is remote.

Beware though of the digital divide and consider some ways that you can stay in one another's hearts and minds without being connected online. For example, having a set time for personal reading or mindfulness each day, like you might in class, can help students hold one another in mind and feel a little connected.

Enable connection by streaming  
tutor periods, circle time or  
assemblies



**Consider**



Work with parents to  
support safe online  
relationships between  
friends

Run a small number of extra-curricular clubs  
or activities or signpost external  
opportunities for pupils



# Clear Expectations

It's important to know what your academic expectations are of children who are working remotely and to communicate these expectations clearly. Children need to know what is expected of them, and we need to ensure that they have everything they need to be able to succeed with any tasks set. It's important to be practical and reassuring and to include families in conversations too.

Have clear, regularly reviewed, realistic expectations



Reassure families that their child is not alone and expectations will be revised for all children

**Consider**



Carefully prioritise, leaning into skills and understanding that matter more or are most achievable at home such as reading and conversation for younger children





# What about the adults?

It's not only children who need to know what's expected of them, but families too. A friendly phone call or email home can go a long way to assuaging family's worries and ensuring that they know what is expected of them and their children. School staff too need to be kept in the loop and we need to remember that their wellbeing matters as well. Regularly check in with staff remotely and consider carefully how to ensure they still feel part of things, that they are clear about what's expected of them and that this feels reasonable and possible in their current situation.

I hope these pointers give you a few ideas and reassurance that whilst the wider situation is out of your control, there is much you can do to support your students. If you remember only one thing, remember the importance of consistent and clear communication with staff, with children and with families. Get that right and the rest will tend to follow.

Dr Pooky Knightsmith  
Director  
Creative Education



My advice to other heads? Say thank you... Say it a lot... to staff, to students, to families; they are all doing extraordinary things right now.





# Helpful?

**Tweet us @CreativeEdu with what  
was helpful & what you would add**



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