

# Otterham C P School

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Dear Parents

I hope you are well and whilst maybe not embracing the home learning (although I know plenty of you are), coping with it! As I kept reminding you during the first lockdown, the most important consideration in all of this is your wellbeing and that of your family. Please make this a priority for yourselves and make contact with us if there is anything we can do to help. You may find the 10 Top Tips on promoting positive mental health useful – see attachment.

Thank you for your feedback regarding the current provision. The positivity and appreciation towards the work teachers are doing has been passed on and well received. It has also been useful to discuss some of the constructive comments in your feedback and as a result, teachers have tweaked their provision. Please be reminded that with 2 or 3 year groups within a class the remote learning offer cannot look like it might in other schools. Also, note that whilst teachers are responsible for the remote learning provision, they are also responsible for the education of the children within the classroom. Our teachers are in school and not working from home. It is certainly quite a mission!

Please be aware that places for critical workers and children who need that extra support are still available. You can access the place at any point going forward and so make sure you get in touch if it is needed. Having asked you to make contact if you are struggling with access to technology, we are assuming everyone has a suitable device. Again, please make contact if this is not the case as we will endeavour to help.

Finally, the Rt Hon Gavin Williamson has informed us that he will share plans for the reopening of schools the week before half term. It seems we will have the frustration of two weeks of media speculation in the run up to this. Whilst everyone wants schools reopened, it is hoped that they do so when it is safe for communities and not simply because we have reached the half way point in a term. Certainly, the feeling amongst those in education is that a return to school on 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2021 is unlikely at this point. We shall wait and see!

As always, if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Kindest regards

Helen Ward



**North Cornwall  
Learning Trust**  
Working Together for Local Children

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**Maintaining good mental health is just as important as having a healthy body. It affects the way children think, feel and act. As a parent, you play an important role in promoting your child's mental health and recognising when there may be early signs of difficulties.**

## But how can you promote good mental health?

Put simply, you can do this by:

- being aware of the things you say and how you speak to your child;
- clear and positive actions;

and

- through the environment you create at home;

So, here are our 10 top tips on practical ways you can positively promote your child's mental health:

### 1. Connect with your child everyday.

Try to have make time every day for an activity where you can connect with your child without distractions that enables comfortable conversation. We all lead busy lives, but doing an activity like this together will offer your child the opportunity for them to feel secure and express how they are doing / feeling;

### 2. Have quiet time together.

This is a great way to connect with your child and takes no planning! Uninterrupted quiet time provides an ideal environment for your child to focus and build their attention span. When things are overwhelming, quiet time can help your child reset their thoughts and avoid behaviour escalation to meltdowns;

### 3. Praise your child when they do well.

Recognise their efforts as well as achievements- praise the small steps. For example, say your child has difficulty sitting quietly and calmly at the dinner table. Although desired, it would be unrealistic to initially expect them to do this for half an hour. So small steps might be praising that they achieved 5 - 10 minutes. At the next meal this could be built on by reminding them of their previous achievement and setting a new goal of 15 minutes;

### 4. Foster your child's self-esteem.

Self-esteem is how they feel about themselves, both inside and out. Children with good self-esteem generally have a positive outlook, accept themselves and feel confident. Fostering self-esteem includes showing love and acceptance, asking questions about their activities / interests and helping them to set realistic goals;

## 5. Actively listen to your child.

That's really listening to what they are saying and how they are feeling. Often the way children feel may seem unrealistic or disproportionate to adults but remember, children do not have the wisdom of experience and they may need help and direction to make sense of situations and feelings. Try to answer your child's questions and reassure them in an age-appropriate manner. Whilst you may not be able to answer all their questions, talking things through can help them feel calmer;

## 6. Wherever possible stick to commitments and routines.

Following through on commitments and routines builds trust and continuity, important relationship factors. Try to keep to as many regular routines as possible to help your child feel safe and secure. This includes having regular times for going to bed, waking up, eating meals and doing activities /hobbies;

## 7. Keep your promises.

Should the need to break a commitment or routine occur make sure there is a valid reason and take the time to explain why to your child. Remember success comes from keeping your promises to your child;

## 8. Find opportunities to play together.

Play is a fantastic way for children to learn new things and develop problem solving skills. It also offers great opportunities for them to learn how to express their feelings;

## 9. Be a positive role model.

Look after your own mental health and wellbeing. Children are intuitive and will readily pick up on feelings such as stress, anxiety, hopelessness and fear.

## 10. Help your child to develop a language of feelings.

Teaching children about feelings can be hard as it's an abstract concept but if they can understand and express their emotions, they will be less likely to 'act out'. For example, you can discuss how characters in a book are feeling and the reasons why they may be feeling that way;

We hope you find these tips helpful. It is important to recognise and accept that sometimes your child may not feel comfortable talking to you. As a parent this is a tough one, but the reality is that there will be occasions where this is the case. Rather than feel resentful or unhappy, you can take positive action and help them find someone they feel comfortable talking to e.g., a grandparent, an older sibling or another positive adult role model. Above all else, if you have any concerns, no matter how minor, or are at all worried about your child's behaviour, mental health or wellbeing please contact your GP. In the first instance they may offer a face-to-face appointment or may ask you to speak to them via phone or video call. GPs are experienced professionals trained to help and you shouldn't worry about wasting their time.