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Dear parents,

Many of you will remember that last year we organised online safety workshops with an organisation called Parent Zone. This company has produced some useful suggestions about how to work from home when the children are around. I have reproduced their article in full in this newsletter and I am sure that you will find some of their suggestions very helpful.

## Oak Academy

I would like to thank parents for their continuing support for our online learning platform, DB Primary, and for the positive feedback that has been received. One or two parents have suggested that some video lessons are introduced to supplement the DB Primary learning activities. Although we are not going to go down this route, I would like to draw parents attention to the DfE's Oak Academy. It is an online resource that includes video lessons presented by experienced teachers.

*The sector-led Oak National Academy has today launched its online classroom and resource hub. The Academy offers 180 video lessons each week for schools to use, across a broad range of subjects. The lessons cover children in Reception through to Year 10 and are free to use by both teachers and young people.*

*The Oak National Academy can be accessed here:*

· <https://www.thenational.academy/>

## How to work from home when the children are around

Perhaps you once dreamt of a flexible working arrangement, with days at home happily spent drifting from garden to keyboard, balancing client calls with **WhatsApp** chats? What you probably didn't factor in was having the whole family in lockdown.

Many of us are now having to adjust to a new way of doing things and are discovering that working from home – with children around – brings a whole new set of pressures. So, your imagined, carefully



choreographed day has become, in reality, a nightmare of noisy kids clamouring for your attention. Suddenly, you need to balance the demands of your employer with those of your family.

How are you to cope when the two distinct worlds of parenting and work collide? The answer, to some extent, will depend on the age of your children and whether you are sharing the load with a partner. But here are some ideas to relieve the potential stress.

### **A flexible approach to working hours**

It may sound daunting, but it will make life easier if you are able to extend your working hours beyond the usual 9 to 5 routine. This could involve starting at 7.30am or finishing at 7.30pm, but it would free up some time during the day to devote to your kids. Just make sure you let work colleagues know when you're taking a break and don't miss any scheduled meetings. And also make sure to timetable some relaxation or pampering at the end of what will be a very long day.

### **Keeping to a routine**

You can't hope to model your daily life on a school timetable, but kids like structure – so make sure they know what to expect each day. If you build in plenty of breaks and things to look forward to, they are more likely to go along with the plan and leave you alone when you're working.

Break down their day into manageable chunks, depending on their age. No young child can be expected to focus on the same grammar workbook for an hour at a time, or to spend long periods of time on any school work. Avoid resistance and boredom by interspersing outdoor activities, art projects, online chats with friends, gaming and TV time.

### **Plan ahead**

It's not easy to think of diverting activities when you're feeling stressed or trying to meet a work deadline, so make a list of ideas and resources and share them with other parents. After all, we're probably all in this for the long haul.

No one is expecting you to replicate the role of a teacher, so be creative in your definition of education. Writing postcards to elderly neighbours, building a model of your house in **Minecraft**, devising a puppet show or growing seeds in a yoghurt pot are all valuable experiences.

There are plenty of resources to help you with this:

- Children's author Michael Rosen has 48 hours' worth of stories, poems, songs and jokes – **all free on Youtube**
- Get a free '**Art is where the home is**' activity pack with creative ideas from leading artists such as Grayson Perry, Antony Gormley and Gillian Wearing
- Free **online dance performances and workshops** for all ages

- Keep an eye on the BBC's **Culture in Quarantine site** for all the latest ideas
- Many museums and galleries have online resources and virtual tours available during the shut down – for instance the **Science Museum, Natural History Museum** and **British Museum**
- And, of course, don't forget the resources available on Parent Zone – including **Google's Be Internet Legends programme** and **Telenor's Digiworld curriculum**, each of which was developed in partnership with Parent Zone.

### **Outdoor time**

Technology may be the greatest way of occupying your children, but it is important to balance this with time away from a screen, being active and, if possible, in the fresh air.

If you have a garden, provide balls, skipping ropes, hoops or beanbags. There's no need for expensive equipment – you can chalk out grids for hopscotch or noughts and crosses, set up a row of water-filled plastic bottles for skittles or organise a scavenger hunt.

If you have no outdoor space, find time to go for a walk, a run or a cycle ride. Set daily challenges, chart progress and reward achievement. It doesn't matter whether you are walking around the block or through a wood, any open space will help clear the mind and any physical activity will stimulate a sense of well-being.

### **Share the load**

It will probably ease the situation if you treat your kids as part of the team; show them that you are facing challenges together as a family. Perhaps they could help around the house with vacuuming, washing up or cleaning the car. You may be surprised that they actually want to help when these things sound more like a shared activity than a chore or a punishment.

Maybe get them to help you devise a suitable soundtrack to accompany these tasks. If you are trying to work and can't concentrate with loud music, introduce them to the idea of silent discos!

You could also involve your children in devising the week's timetable and choosing a daily theme. If you have more than one child, they could take turns in organising the outdoor activity, selecting the audiobook, TV programme or board game. Giving them responsibility for these decisions should also help avoid the inevitable arguments between siblings.

### **Relax**

Most importantly, do not expect too much of yourself or your children: you cannot do the impossible. Managing a work-life balance has never been harder and the stress of overload can lead to feelings of failure on every front.

Trying to fulfil the role of parent, teacher and worker without ever leaving the home would be a lot to ask, even without the anxieties surrounding a global pandemic. There is nothing wrong in resorting to an afternoon of Disney movies and a load of junk food.

You can't always be devising challenging activities and structured play. Your sanity depends on sometimes giving yourself and your kids a break.

## **Prayer**

Today's prayer is from Christian Aid. Please use it as a family or for private contemplation.

'For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come... will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.' (Romans 8:38-39)

God of heaven and earth,  
in these times of isolation,  
apart from loved ones  
distant from friends  
away from neighbours  
thank you that there is nothing  
in all of creation,  
not even coronavirus,  
that is able to separate us from your love.

And may your love that never fails  
continue to be shared  
through the kindness of strangers  
looking out for each other,  
for neighbours near and far  
all recognising our shared vulnerability,  
each of us grateful for every breath,  
and willing everyone to know the gift  
of a full and healthy life.  
Keep us all in your care.  
Amen.

Once again I would like to conclude this letter by paying tribute to the wonderful efforts of our teachers and support staff who are adapting brilliantly to working remotely and keeping DB Primary working so well. Many of them, of course, are working from home when their children are around, and I hope that the article above proves helpful for them too!

Yours Sincerely,

Mr P O'Rourke  
*Headteacher*