My ref:

Your ref:

Tel No: 0121 569 2770

Date: April 2020

Dear Children, Carers and Parents.

In this extremely unprecedented period, I wanted to take the opportunity to write to you as the schools break up for a well deserved rest. It has been a very testing period for all and schools have responded with great resilience in keeping settings open and to making contingencies so that disruption to learning is kept to a minimum. Many key colleagues from schools and Sandwell Childrens Trust have maintained contact with you providing additional work and giving well-being support.

I know that many of you have turned to Sandwell Virtual School for support and advice. With this in mind can I firstly direct you to this excellent advice from the Public Health England: carers on supporting children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, update 30th March 2020. Which informs us of how we can help children and young people cope with stress.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-parents-and-carers-on-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

Secondly you will be aware that there is a host of information on our website where you will find useful links to educational activities during the school closures. This is especially useful if our children need variety or additional work to maintain high standards. I have listed them overleaf.

Also accessible at:

<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200328/virtual_school_for_looked_after_children/4466/resource_links_for_children>

Thirdly having young children of my own to care for, I can advise on the importance of structure for them and the crucial part a daily timetable can have. Any timetable should be a combination of core skills subject (English and Maths) and things they enjoy!

Next: **Personal Education Plans** will continue to be reviewed during the school term therefore Sandwell Virtual School has organised **carers access to an online portal called ePEP the (electronic personal education plan).**

When you log on you will have access to the young person’s module (Squiddle) which has been developed to help us stay in communication with you and your child at home, as well as other professionals such as Designated Teachers and Social Workers.  You will also be able to directly ask and answer questions about anything that worries or concerns your child at this difficult time.

It works in a similar way to other social media platforms but this platform is totally private and secure, so you can keep in touch with the local authority and school knowing it is safe to do so. **We do need to have a valid email address for you therefore if you do not have access, email** **epep\_enquiries@sandwell.gov.uk** **and we will update your record.**

If you have any questions or need help logging into the platform, please call the e-PEP support team on 0333 772 0944.

Finally, The West Midlands Virtual Schools are delighted to bring you **Connect & Create**: [www.artslinkwm.org.uk/connect-create](http://www.artslinkwm.org.uk/connect-create). Connect & Create is a new online feature of our Artslink programme, which provides at-home arts & cultural activities specially selected and commissioned for care experienced children & young people. We know that the arts can present a hugely important opportunity for connection and creativity for care experienced CYP and their key adults during this isolating time, as well as helping to continue their learning.

We hope you will dive in and give it a go – creative challenges, artist demonstrations, career pathways and a gallery to showcase some of the work produced. Activities will be updated regularly, so the site will grow in content over the next weeks and months; you can sign up to receive updates.

Please also remember that sudden changes to structure that school can bring may be traumatic for our children, but we all need a rest, an opportunity to step back and reflect.

I hope the Easter break is one that you can enjoy whilst taking every precaution to protect yourselves and those around you.



Balwant Bains

Headteacher Sandwell Virtual School

For Children in Care

**Useful resources for children**

**Children aged 0-5yrs.**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people>

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/programmes-and-campaigns/bookstart/families/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/look-say-sing-play/>

<http://www.smallstepsbigchanges.org.uk/biglittlemoments>

<https://hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk/>

* **Twinkl:** <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/>:

a month of free access to parents in the event of self-isolation or school closures (use promo ‘UKTWINKLHELPS’)

* **BBC Bitesize:** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>
* **The Imagination Tree:** <https://theimaginationtree.com/>

Creative art and craft activities for the very youngest.

* **Toy Theatre:** <https://toytheater.com/>

Educational online games

* **Big History Project:** <https://www.bighistoryproject.com/home>

**Secondary School Specific.**

* **British Council:** <https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/find>

Resources for English language learning

* **Oxford Owl for Home:** <https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/>

Lots of free resources for Primary.

* **Geography Games:** <https://world-geography-games.com/world.html>

Geography gaming

* **Cbeebies Radio:** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/radio>

Listening activities.

* **Paw Print Badges:** [https://www.pawprintbadges.co.uk](https://www.pawprintbadges.co.uk/)

Free challenge packs and other downloads. Indoor and outdoor.

* **iDEA Awards:** [https://idea.org.uk](https://idea.org.uk/)

Digital enterprise award scheme you can complete online

* **Blockly:** [https://blockly.games](https://blockly.games/)

Learn all about computer programming.

* S**cratch:** <https://scratch.mit.edu/explore/projects/games/>

Learn all about computer programming.

* **Ted Ed:** [https://ed.ted.com](https://ed.ted.com/)

A range of engaging educational videos

* **Duolingo:** [https://www.duolingo.com](https://www.duolingo.com/)

Learn languages for free.

* **The Kids Should See This**: [https://thekidshouldseethis.com](https://thekidshouldseethis.com/)

Wide range of educational videos

* **National Geographic Kids**: <https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/>

Activities and quizzes

* **Mystery Science:** [https://mysteryscience.com](https://mysteryscience.com/)

Free science lessons

* **Crash Course:** <https://thecrashcourse.com/>
* **Khan Academy:** <https://www.khanacademy.org/> - all ages and all subject areas

Also accessible at:

<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200328/virtual_school_for_looked_after_children/4466/resource_links_for_children>