



# St. Cuthbert's RC VA First School

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Head teacher: Mrs C McGregor



## COVID -19 – school update 25.03.20

In light of the Prime Ministers briefings to the country over the last week, I wanted to reinforce some messages.

People will only be allowed to leave their home for the following very limited purposes:

- Shopping for basic necessities, as infrequently as possible
- One form of exercise a day - for example a run, walk, or cycle - alone or with members of their household;
- Any medical need, to provide care or to help a vulnerable person; and
- Travelling to and from work, but only where this is absolutely necessary and cannot be done from home.

The final category is where school fits. If your child can be cared for at home then please keep them there, if only one carer has to go into work then please keep the children at home. Our homes carry the least risk of transferring the virus in order to keep ourselves and others safe.

We will continue to offer a service to our 'critical workers' as long as we can safely do so, keeping St Cuthbert's staff fit and healthy is essential in this process – if we get ill we will be unable to look after the children. We have been working together with Tweedmouth West First School who have kindly offered their school as a place for us to work together.

### **For those of you at home I have some messages**

We know that some of you may be feeling overwhelmed and under pressure by everything that's happening. This includes the work being sent home for your child. I wanted to just give my perspective on it all and I hope this can help with some stresses.

A few points to note first:

1) This is not homeschooling. This is an unprecedented emergency situation impacting on the whole world. Let's keep perspective. Homeschooling is a choice, where you plan for it and you are your child's school teacher in whatever form you choose. What you are doing at home is distance learning you are trying your best to get it right - there is no right or wrong.

2) You are, and always have been, your child's primary educator. If you decide that your child isn't going to engage with anything sent home and is going to spend the entire period playing in the dirt, or baking, or playing with lego, then that is your choice and it's fine.

3) Schools have had to quickly adapt too, over the last week there has been a lot of not knowing what we are doing. We had no notice, no preparation time and we were not told to 'continue to plan lessons as normal and just send them home' – that's not possible.

4) It is absolutely not possible to facilitate distance learning with a primary aged child **and** work from home at the same time. I know I've tried!!! If you're trying to do that, stop now. You can certainly have activities where your child learns, but your focus is your job, and survival. Again, unprecedented. Stop trying to be superheroes, there are times that they can be independently busy – they also learn then.

*Be with your children, talk with them, play with them, teach them resilience and perseverance. Teach them the positives and negatives of the Internet ensuring that they are safe. Help them overcome worries thus preventing anxieties building. Teach them to care for others but above all be a brilliant role model to your children, you are their most important person. They will become your friend as they grow up but at the moment you are their parent/carer and so you show them how to be brilliant.*

### **My ideal for the children at St Cuthbert's**

- A bit of reading every day - they read, you read to them, you both listen to an audiobook, immerse your child in books. This is one of the best things you can do for them. If you have the opportunity read up on the research around reading do it. It is fascinating.
- Some free writing now and then. If they'll keep a diary or something, great. If not, would they draw a comic? If they keep a diary of this time imagine in many years to come how people could reference it. They could become the modern Samuel Pepys
- Practical hands on maths. Be that via cooking, cleaning, outside or some maths games, physical or digital.
- Some fine motor work. Lego, cutting, playdough, tidying up small toys.
- Physical exercise everyday – *we've been doing 'PE with Joe' everyday live on Youtube at 9am!*
- Some art/music where possible through the week. Doesn't need to be guided. Share it in your window for everyone to see when they do their daily walk alone watch for the smiles.
- A project, if old enough getting them to independently work on a project is great for keeping brains ticking over. Get them researching in a book or online and putting together something to present to you or family.

- If younger, lots of imaginative free play, the more independent the better.
- Use the resources (paper and online) staff have sent out as and when you need to – we don't know how long this situation will last and so there is no point pushing your child to achieve unrealistic targets.
- Spend some time with God. At this moment in time there will be many questions that cannot be answered. Why is this happening? How can God allow this?

Please help your child to explore these questions. Guide them to look for the positives when we are surrounded with so many challenges and so much sadness. Spend time with them praying. The children of St Cuthbert's always amaze me when they are spiritual, they have a very deep understanding of the importance of life. Help them to continue to nurture this, help them to have hope for the future, to plan how they can help society moving forward. My biggest hope is that this whole experience will change people for the better. We will again as a society care for each other greatly and remove the selfish materialism that has grown.

You are doing enough. You are loving your children and supporting them through a difficult time. Look after yourself too, minimising stress is absolutely vital in a time like this for mental health. Don't let this be something that stresses you. Only you can control that by accepting what is in your circle of control and what is not.

We have provided activities to help you, so that you can use them if you want to. The staff have been delighted to see the activities the children have been doing at home and it is great to see so many of you engaging with the range of activities teachers have added to seesaw, school360 etc. They continue to put new ideas on most days so do have a look. I know early years have their own Facebook page which I can see is a great way of sharing what's going on. Well done to you all!!

We will keep in touch.

Take care and God bless to you all,

Clare McGregor - Headteacher of the most wonderful school in the world!