Dear parents and carers,

The Virtual School will be in contact every week to share ideas, provide guidance and just keep in touch with families during this time of school closure.

**What is a virtual school?** The Virtual School acts to promote the progress and educational attainment of young people who are in or who have been in care. The school doesn’t have a building and children don’t attend it—they remain the responsibility of the school at which they are on roll. The Virtual School staff work very closely with schools and other agencies to ensure pupils have the best possible provision, educational opportunities and outcomes. We can advise and guide schools and help pupils gain access to specialist support if needed. We work strategically to influence policy, provide training and ensure that the voice of the child is always at the heart of our work.

**Who are we?** We are a team of 18, led by Michelle Johnson our Head teacher - 07990 367545. There is a wealth of experience in the team across all phases of education. Many of us are teachers and we work very closely with schools and post 16 settings.

Early Years and Foundation Lead - Christine Grandison 07711 117472  
Primary - Sarah Hazell (primary lead and SENCo) 07771 975862 and Verity Banbury 07826 950523  
Transition 6-7- Ruth Thornburn 07785 453252 and Elisabeth Pinkney 07776 997315  
Secondary - Emma Frank 07753 976778 and Hazel Fleming 07917 534406  
Out of County Secondary - Sarah Pigneguy 07799 097812  
Learning Mentor (year 11 focus) - Izzy Crowther 07747 648494  
Post 16 - EET - Mark Walker (coordinator) 07824 866557, Barney Perkins 07919 298286 and Sarah Kelly 07584 481253  
Consultant- Rachel Cosgrove 07733 304139  
Business Delivery - Tracey Talbot 01865 328550 Admin - Debbie Hewings 01865 328550  
Data Education Performance - Ged Taylor 07775 025273  
Engagement Officer Children in Care Council - James Collins 07803 287913

We are in touch with schools - particularly with Designated Teachers and Heads across all age groups. Schools will be planning how they are going to continue supporting the education of their children over the next few weeks. Their staff are working hard and those staying open are doing a great job with children of key workers and vulnerable pupils. Many schools are getting to grips with new ways of working including online materials, virtual staff meetings and maintaining safe ways of working. We are all on a steep learning curve!

The Guide we sent to you includes lots of ideas for activities to do at home. Remember that the idea is not to try and replicate school but to give children some time to feel safe and learn other things. Even some 1-1 time for children is so beneficial and even though children are in school, for 6 hours a day, that doesn’t mean they are experiencing 6 hours of actual learning; so try activities in short bursts and don’t worry too much about a rigid timetable. Leave it to teachers to pick up the gaps when school does start back up as
schools will have to review their curriculum topics for all children in order to help children get back into a routine and settle into formal learning again.

If you need a school place and you are unsure about what schools can provide over the Easter Holiday, you can look on the Local Authority websites in your area. Your social worker will be able to help you with this. For school aged pupils in Oxfordshire:
Email: schoolplaceavailability@oxfordshire.gov.uk
For Early Years providers who are open for parents/carers of key workers and vulnerable children and is updated daily:
https://fisd.oxfordshire.gov.uk/kb5/oxfordshire/directory/advice.page?id=jQl6XwS8a9M.

If your child needs a voice- how about contacting the Children in Care Council.
Any pupil in care or leaving care can join the CiCC. It is a great way to get and stay connected.
With schools closed it might be a good way for to make friends and join up with others who may share similar circumstances.
It is an active group who campaign, share views and plan events. If your child is interested or could be encouraged to join the CiCC, then you should contact James Collins on 07803 287813 or james.collins@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Remember that there is support for adults too:
You can contact Samaritans T: 116 123 if you are low and anxious and need to talk to someone
You can contact your GP
If it’s not an emergency, you can call T: 111 to discuss health concerns
In case of an emergency call 999 Police, Ambulance, Fire
You can call the police on a non-emergency line T: 101

Links to websites re Emotional health:
Here are some websites people have been sharing around emotional health.
www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/
https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/

others:
www.actionforhappiness.org
www.thehappybroadcast.com
www.thehappynewspaper.com

If you find anything you would like to share with other families, please email us and let us know what is working.

Take care and best wishes from the Virtual School Team.

Oxfordshire Virtual School