

Dear Parents and Carers,

11th April, 2020

As you are aware, the situation regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to evolve. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support.

The Department of Education and Training (DET) has now advised that all schools will move to remote and flexible learning from Wednesday 15th April.

This means that all students who can learn at home must learn from home. This is a very clear directive by the Victorian Government based on the advice of the Chief Health Officer.

This action is not being taken lightly and I am sure that you will understand that these steps are to slow the spread of the virus and ensure the health and safety of all Victorians.

Most of our school staff will be working from home and all of them have been working hard to put plans in place to ensure continuity of learning and to support the wellbeing of all our students.

Learning from Home

When you start to think about helping your child to learn from home, remember that no one expects you to be a teacher or a subject expert. The most important thing you can do is continue to provide routine, support and encouragement to your child. We have created a suggested 'Learning at Home – Daily Structure' for learning that might be helpful for you and your child.

Start and end each day with a check in to help your child:

- clarify and fully understand the instructions/activities they get from their teachers
- help them organise themselves and set priorities for their learning at home

Encourage regular exercise breaks, healthy eating habits and make sure they drink enough water. Also try to keep a normal bedtime routine.

You can also support your child by keeping up to date with any school communications. The school will continue to communicate via SMS, Facebook, Instagram and the school website.

Setting Up a Learning Environment

Every home is different however, where possible, learning should take place in a space your family shares, for example, in the lounge room or dining room. These spaces are preferable over a bedroom, where your child can feel isolated and supervision can be more challenging. It should be a place that can be quiet at times and where you or another adult is present.

Individual Work Packs

We are aware that the majority of our students have limited access to digital technology (computers, iPads, etc.) and internet service at home to support their learning. Taking this into consideration, we have made the decision to support all of our students and their families to ensure they can access quality, individualised tasks by providing work packs for each child.

Teachers have been working hard to prepare work packs for each student, with tasks being carefully selected to cater for your child's individual learning needs. A work pack will be created each week and you will need to pick it up from school and return it the following week so that teachers can track your child's progress. Collection/Return times from the school office are as follows:

- **Tuesday 14th April – 12.30pm – 3.30pm - ONLY**
- Every Monday thereafter 10.00am – 1.00pm

If you are unable to collect your child's Work Pack, please make contact with us at school.

If your child has access to technology, they are more than welcome to use it to support their learning.

Additional Literacy & Numeracy Resources and Tips

In addition to the resources and materials that the school will provide, you could use the following resources to support your child as they learn from home:

Literacy and numeracy:

Tips for parents and carers to build their child's literacy and numeracy skills can be downloaded from the www.education.vic.gov.au. Search: *get involved in literacy and numeracy*

Premiers' Reading Challenge:

The challenge encourages children and students from birth to Year 10 to read a set number of books over the year and record their efforts online. Register at www.education.vic.gov.au. Search: *premiers reading challenge*

Mathematics and numeracy at home:

Parents and carers play an important role in helping develop their child's numeracy skills. Advice and resources for families can be downloaded from www.education.vic.gov.au. Search: *mathematics and numeracy at home*

Advice for Parent/Carers of Children with Additional Needs

Your child's teacher knows them well and has planned individual learning tasks to cater for their needs. The parents' page of the DET website (www.education.vic.gov.au/parents) has several resources to help parents and carers support learning from home. For parents and carers of children with learning difficulties, a comprehensive resource '*Understanding learning difficulties for parents: a practical guide*' can be downloaded from www.uldforparents.com. This guide provides parents and carers with practical advice about learning difficulties as well as a list of recommended apps. If you need any additional assistance, please contact the school.

Mental Health & Wellbeing Check In

Just as you set aside time for physical exercise, it is important to make time each day to check in on your child's mental health and wellbeing. It may take your child some time to adjust to their new routine for learning and key changes such as not seeing classmates in person. Every child will react differently to new circumstances – feelings of sadness, frustration, anxiousness and even anger are entirely normal.

You can help your child by:

- providing an opportunity to talk about how they feel and listening to what they say
- identifying some specific actions they can take by themselves or with you to address any concerns they might have
- asking how they are finding learning remotely, and if there is anything they'd like your help with

If you have any other concerns about the health and wellbeing of your child, please don't hesitate to contact the school for additional support.

Supervision at School

The very clear message from the Victorian Government, based on the advice of the Chief Health Officer, is that **all students who can learn at home must learn from home.**

Parents who are essential workers or feel that there are 'exceptional circumstances' and require their child/children to be supervised on school premises, must complete an 'On-Site Attendance Application Form'. The application form is available on the school website (see below) and must be sent by email to whittington.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au.

School Website: <https://www.whittingtonps.vic.edu.au/>

For next week the application form needs to be submitted by 12.00pm on Tuesday 14th April, 2020. A copy of the application form will also be available at the school office on Tuesday morning 9.00 – 10.00am or 11.00 – 12.00am.

For each week after next week, parents or carers, either essential workers or those citing exceptional circumstances, will need to complete the 'On-site Attendance Application Form' and email to the school (as above) in the week prior to their child attending on-site by 12.00pm each Thursday. This is necessary to ensure staff supervision can be organised.

To ensure equal access to the learning program for all students, if your child must attend school for supervision, they will work on the same tasks provided in their work pack by their class teacher. Supervision will be provided by a Teacher or Education Support Staff member, not necessarily your child's own classroom teacher.

It is also important that parent and carers understand that to ensure the health and wellbeing of all staff and students on site, strict guidelines will be observed to ensure social distancing and this may limit children's interactions with others.

Any students who are unwell and/or displaying any symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) **MUST NOT** attend school.

Communication with School

Although most school staff are expected to work from home, we will endeavor to keep communicating with you to support your child's learning at home. If you need to contact us, please call the school office between 8.30am – 3.30pm and leave a message or email the school (whittington.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au) and we will respond to your message as soon as possible.

Additional Information

The Department of Education and Training's Learning from Home website also provides information and resources for parents and carers:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/learning/Pages/home-learning.aspx>

Further information regarding coronavirus (COVID-19) and schools can be found on the Department's website, which will continue to be updated as the situation evolves:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/department/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>

This is clearly going to be a challenging time for us all and it is critically important that we continue to work very closely together to ensure that we provide the very best possible support for the ongoing wellbeing and learning of all our students.

Please don't hesitate to contact us at school if you or your child require any further assistance or support.

Take care of yourself and your family at this challenging time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Craig Smith', written over a light blue rectangular background.

Craig Smith,
Principal

Learning at Home - Daily Structure

8:00 – 9:00	Morning Routine	Wake up, eat your breakfast, make your bed, get dressed and ask if you can help anyone in your home
9:00 – 9:30	Morning Movement	Go for a walk, ride your bike or scooter, play a game outside, jump on the trampoline or do some other exercises
	Organisation Time	Get your things organised - Workbook, Pencil Case, etc.
9:30 – 11:00	Learning Time	<p>Read your Workbook instructions carefully and work your way through the tasks that your teacher has set for you</p> <p>Make sure you complete a variety of activities each day – Maths, Reading, Writing, etc.</p> <p>Ask an adult or your older siblings for some help as you need it</p>
11:00 - 11:30	Movement and healthy snack break	Ask if you can help make a healthy snack in the kitchen. Go outside and do some star jumps, bounce a ball and do some stretching. Drink plenty of water and wash your hands when you come inside
11:30 - 12:30	Learning Time	<p>Complete any tasks that you didn't finish this morning.</p> <p>Now you might like to:</p> <p>Reading – choose a book to read by yourself, with someone else or FaceTime a grandparent/friend and read to them</p> <p>Writing – do some free choice writing – a story, letter, poem, recipe, etc. Ask someone to read your writing back to you and listen to make sure that it makes sense. Ask an adult to help you to check your spelling</p> <p>Maths – play a maths game using things you might have at home – compare the weight/height/length of objects, use a deck of cards for number or memory games, use toys to make patterns/groups, practise quick number facts, use kitchen scales, etc.</p> <p>If you have access, you can use technology during this time. See suggestions for online learning options.</p>
	Lunch Time	Ask if you can help make your own lunch, remember to eat healthy and drink lots of water. Don't forget to help clean up
	Quiet Time	Do something to relax. You might like to read a book, do some colouring or listen to music
2:00 – 3:30	Creative Time	Time to stretch your brain – do some puzzles, draw a picture, build with LEGO, do some colouring, create something with materials you find around the house or play with your toys
	Outside Time	<p>Go for a nature walk and collect things to use in your creative time tomorrow</p> <p>Take photos on your devices of interesting objects you see to draw or write about tomorrow</p>

STEM ideas	Digital Ideas (some apps and websites may require accounts, please check with adults first)
Make a board game using your small toys Use your toys to tell a story from a book	Blockly – https://blockly.games Learn computer programming skills
Make a LEGO maze	National Geographic - https://www.natgeokids.com/au/
Use furniture or kitchen objects to make a marble run Create a treasure hunt, hiding your toys and ask someone to find them.	Ted Ed – https://ed.ted.com Engaging educational videos
Build a fort using blankets and cushions and read books in there	Mystery Science – https://mysteryscience.com Science lessons for free
See who has the most pairs of shoes in your house, lay them all out in a line and count them or graph them.	The kids should see this – https://thekidshouldseethis.com Wide range of educational videos
Set up a mini golf course, use rolled up paper and a soft ball to play the course.	Crash course – https://thecrashcourse.com Educational videos for older children
Build a tower with left over catalogues and tape	Crash course kids – https://www.youtube.com/user/crashcoursekids Educational videos for younger children
Make a time capsule, writing about all the things you love at the moment, and then hide it for yourself to find in 10 years.	Sci Show Kids – https://www.youtube.com/user/scishowkids Science videos for children
Turn your favourite story book into a song and act and sing it out to your toys.	TinkerCad – https://tinkercad.com All kids of making ideas
Draw a detailed map of your bedroom, then draw a futuristic plan of your bedroom.	Red Ted Art – https://redtedart.com Lovely art ideas
Make a model of a futuristic city using things from around your house. Blankets can be roads, and you could build the buildings and homes.	The Imagination Tree – https://theimaginationtree.com Creative art and craft ideas
Using recycled materials, make a robot, car, or invent a new way to entertain your pets. Using kitchen utensils, see if you can make a bridge between two chairs	Toy Theatre – https://toytheatre.com Educational online games.
See if you can sprout new vegetables from old carrot tops	Minecraft EDU - https://education.minecraft.net/ Build worlds and explore the classroom ideas
Colour some flowers or plants by cutting them and letting them rest in some coloured water Build a volcano out of playdough and test if vinegar and bi-carb soda will explode in it. Make "oobleck", a non-Newtonian fluid out of water, food dye and corn flour.	Duolingo – https://duolingo.com Learn languages