

DET dispatch

27:03:2020

'The best of times...the worst of times' is how Dickens described the world of the French Revolution in A Tale of Two Cities: 'Unprecedented times' describes where we find ourselves. Over the past two weeks, our world, one which has seemed to change almost by the hour, has been both challenging and occasionally fearful. I am, therefore, incredibly proud of the way in which our school communities and trust Central Services staff have responded: quite frankly, our teams have been amazing.

Over what has been a tumultuous time, the response from all of our school staff has been measured and caring. The deep concern shown for our learners and fellow colleagues has been humbling. The greatest sadness is, undoubtedly, the sacrifice our Year 11s and 13s have had to make. In each of our schools the heads and teachers have imparted difficult messages to these learners. They have done so in a measured and moral way and our learners have responded with grace.

The forthcoming weeks and possibly months are going to be testing and I know you will respond professionally in order to ensure the best possible educational provision continues for all. I know this requires all of us to work in different ways and that in itself increases workload: for this I am so very grateful. Thank you.

Communication remains key and I will be sending out a regular Trust briefing which will contain important information and, in many ways more importantly, 'good' news stories from across our Trust: we continue to value 'joy'. To date the communication between colleagues has been both effective and supportive and certainly the heads have appreciated the camaraderie provided through our daily tele-briefings.

At such times as these, we have learned that being part of a Trust, as opposed to a standalone school, is an entirely positive thing. The intelligent and generous sharing across our schools and the expert advice and interpretation of Government directives by Central Services for all our schools has proved invaluable on both an emotional and intellectual level.

Your headteacher will be sending you a weekly briefing and our next steps include setting up an IT solution so that teams within schools can communicate virtually and effectively: no one should feel alone.

So, while this may be a time which feels dominated by lists and logistics, in fact I suspect we'll remember it as a time of deep-rooted humanity. I am hopeful that we, the older generation, will help our learners, the next generation, to play their part in a crisis that will one day pass.

Please stay safe.

Josie Valentine

CEO of the Danes Educational Trust



1 Separate work and play

Easier said than done, but possibly the most important one to follow for the sake of your mental health. If you have been given working hours, or if you have set yourself a working day, stick to it. Make your team or students and parents aware when you will be contactable and work only within those times.

Once you respond to the odd parent out of hours, in the evening or on a weekend, you give all people permission to expect your response at their convenience.

In education, it is difficult enough to do this under normal circumstances. Without the structure of the normal school day to support your barriers between work and play, the lines will blur very quickly so try and maintain this strict division.

4 Practice social media hygiene

This is a difficult one to follow. All around us, there is a media furore that verges on hysteria, reporting on the daily implications of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Add to that the Whatsapp and Twitter rumours of travel restrictions, mandatory health checks, flight cancellations, government deliberations – it quickly becomes impossible to keep a clear head. As such, trying to limit social media at this time is vital.

Follow the official channels for news announcements, mute those Whatsapp groups (you know the ones) and focus on what you can verify, not what others have heard about from a friend of a friend who might be in the know.

Source: TES

2 Get outside - within guidelines

Having an excuse to stay inside for a day or two may sound fantastic at first, but it gets very old very quickly. With the pressures of the new working environment, it also begins to get harder to motivate yourself to get out.

However, if you can, get outside at least once a day during daylight hours, walk alone to the park, do some gardening for half an hour, or just sit outside and feel the breeze on your face.

Obviously some of these ideas will depend on what's allowed under the rules being imposed amid the coronavirus outbreak, and the importance of keeping your distance from others must be maintained at all times, but if circumstances allow it then do what you can to see some green spaces.

It's easy to feel like you're alone when working remotely, but the truth is we are all in this together, so keep in touch whenever possible.

DID YOU KNOW?

We can subscribe to the headspace app for free. It offers guided meditation and lots of sleep aids. Follow the instructions by clicking [HERE](#)

5 Spread the love

If you are finding today difficult, then you can be sure that someone you work with is in the same boat. Your frustrations and the pressures that cause them are universal for your colleagues, so don't go it alone.

Check in with your work friends, is there someone who has fallen off the radar over the past couple of days? Reach out, have a phone chat, a video call, organise a remote film night together, play a game over the internet, set each other a challenge to paint something or write a poem.

HAVE A CUPPA!

We are looking at safe ways for teams within schools to talk virtually with each other.



3 Work up a sweat

We all know that exercise is good for us, yet it rarely sounds like a good idea. With the early mornings, late evenings and sacred weekends of teaching it can be especially hard to find the time and the energy to get physical.

However, if you follow rule number one and get your working hours in order, then use your free time to do some exercise. You could do yoga in the garden, follow an exercise class on YouTube, or go for a run – again, though, ensure you keep away from others you see out by at least two metres.



Please send in your contributions for the next DET newsletter to [Liz Smith](#). We would love to see fun pictures of staff working from home or anything that you would like to share for the Easter edition.



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