

# GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS – DISTANCE LEARNING



## **ESTABLISH ROUTINES & EXPECTATIONS**

From the first day Abbeyfield implements any distance learning, parents need to establish routines and expectations. We encourage parents to set regular hours for their children's school work and expect students begin their studies at 9:00am through until 3:00pm, following their regular timetable for the day. Your children should move regularly and take periodic breaks as they study. It is important that parents set these expectations for how their children will spend their days starting as soon as distance learning is implemented, not several days later after it becomes apparent a child is struggling with the absence of routine.

## **TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN HELPING YOUR CHILD PROCESS THEIR OWN LEARNING**

In the course of a regular school day at Abbeyfield, your son or daughter engages with other students or adults hundreds of times. These social interactions and opportunities for mediation include turning to a peer to exchange a thought or idea, participating in small or large group discussions, asking questions for clarification, collaborating on group projects, and countless other moments. While some of these social interactions will be re-created on virtual platforms, others will not. Human beings learn best when they have opportunities to process their learning with others. Beyond the check-ins recommended at the start and end of each day, parents should regularly circle back and engage with their children about what they are learning. However, it's important that your children own their work; don't complete assignments for them, even when they are struggling.

## **DEFINE THE PHYSICAL SPACE FOR YOUR CHILD TO STUDY**

Your child may have a regular place for doing homework under normal circumstances, but this space may or may not be suitable for an extended period of time, as will be the case if distance learning is implemented. We encourage families to establish a space/location where their children will learn most of the time. This should be a public/family space, not in a child's bedroom, to help your child differentiate between school time and personal time.

## **MONITOR COMMUNICATIONS FROM ABBEYFIELD SCHOOL**

Teachers at Abbeyfield will set work through Show My Homework for the day. Other communication with parents will be through School Coms, the school website and via Twitter, when and as necessary. The frequency and detail of these communications will be determined by your children's ages, maturity, and their degree of independence. However, we ask parents to remember that teachers will be communicating with dozens of other families, and that communications should be essential, succinct, and self-aware.

## **BEGIN AND END EACH DAY WITH A CHECK IN**

Parents are encouraged to start and finish each day with a simple check-in. In the morning, ask what is your child learning today? What are their learning targets or goals? How will they spend their time? What resources do they require? What support do they need? This brief grounding conversation matters. It allows children to process the instructions they've received from their teachers. It helps them organise themselves and set priorities. Older students may not want to have these check-ins



with parents, but they should nevertheless. Parents should establish these check-ins as regular parts of each day. Not all students thrive in a distance learning environment; some struggle with too much independence or lack of structure. These check-in routines need to be established early, before students fall behind or begin to struggle.

### **ESTABLISH TIMES FOR QUIET AND REFLECTION**

A challenge for families with multiple children will be how to manage all of their children's needs, especially when those children are different ages and have different needs. There may be times when siblings need to work in different rooms to avoid distraction.

### **ENCOURAGE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND/OR EXERCISE**

Make sure your children remember to move and exercise. This is vitally important to their health, well-being, and to their learning. Our physical education teachers may recommend activities or exercises, but it is important for parents to model and encourage exercise. Think also about how your children can pitch in more around the house with chores or other responsibilities. Don't let your children off the hook – expect them to help out.

### **REMAIN MINDFUL OF YOUR CHILDS STRESS AND/OR WORRIES**

Abbeyfield will only implement distance learning if ordered to by the Government or are unable to provide enough staffing to ensure the safety and well-being of students. We will follow all Government advice. Should this happen, it is imperative for parents to help their children manage the worry, anxiety, and range of emotions they may experience. Difficult though it may be, do your best not to transfer your stress or worry to your children. They will be out of sorts, whether they admit it or not, and need as much normal routine as parents can provide.

### **MONITOR HOW MUCH TIME YOUR CHILD IS SPENDING ONLINE**

We do not want our students staring at computer screens for 7-8 hours a day. We ask that parents remember most teachers are not experts in distance learning and that it will require some trial-and-error before we find the right balance between online and offline learning experiences. Teachers may periodically check in with you to assess what you're seeing at home and what we need to adjust. We thank you in advance for your patience and partnership whilst we enter these unprecedented times!

### **KEEP YOUR CHILDREN SOCIAL BUT SET RULES AROUND THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTIONS**

There's always excitement when school closes. If Abbeyfield implements this distance learning plan, the initial excitement of school being closed will fade quickly when students start missing their friends, classmates, and teachers. Help your children maintain contact with friends when circumstances permit. Please also monitor your children's social media use, especially during an extended school closure. Older students will rely more on social media to communicate with friends. Social media apps such as SnapChat, Instagram, WhatsApp, or Facebook are not official, school-sanctioned channels of communication between teachers and students. We ask parents to monitor their children's use of social media. Remind your children to be polite, respectful, and appropriate in their communications and to represent your family's values in their interactions with others. A student's written words and tone can sometimes offend or cause harm to others.

