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Coronavirus Assembly

Dear Parents and Carers,

Following on from our newsletter on Friday and our response to news of the coronavirus outbreak, I wanted to keep parents informed of what we are doing at school.

In addition to our usual learning and routines, we have demonstrated effective handwashing and continue to do so. We are also sending water bottles home for daily cleaning. However, in spite of our view to “keep calm and carry on”, it is clear that a significant number of our children are concerned about what they are hearing and seeing on the news.

This morning, we held an extended assembly for Years One to Six (Robins had a Reception age-appropriate talk in class). Our assembly started by watching some children doing some amazing things – skateboarding, snowboarding, bmx-ing, kick-boxing and so on.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-UybwoT0DEw>

This might seem an odd thing to start a coronavirus assembly with but it helped us to introduce a discussion about risk. We all agreed that the things we were seeing were all risky and that the people doing them must have been practising for a long time before they felt comfortable taking a risk.

Following on from this, we began talking about things that we did that could be risky. Some children talked about riding their bikes, others about walking their dogs – some even talked about getting out of bed! We came to the conclusion that there were lots of things out there that could be dangerous but we didn't spend our time worrying about them. *Similarly, we reassured the children that they shouldn't be worrying about coronavirus.* We talked about how there were adults around them to keep them safe and that the risk coronavirus poses is low.

We watched Dr Chris' (of Operation Ouch! fame) videos on the coronavirus webpage on the BBC Newsround site: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51204456>

We talked about the symptoms of the coronavirus and how it affects people. We stressed that the significant majority of people made a full recovery and that doctors were only really worried about people who were already unwell.

The children asked the following types of question:

Where did the coronavirus come from?

How do you know if you have it? (We spoke about the symptoms, contacting a doctor, and how people might be tested)

How does it spread? (Dr Chris answers this in one of his videos)

Why are they still letting flights in from Italy/China? (This one couldn't be answered fully, but children were assured that government was making sure that people were being safe).





Some of our older children were aware that schools in Italy had closed. The implied question was would we do the same? (We assured them that they would not be getting an extra two week holiday but that we would do what we were asked to by doctors/government!)

We brought our attention back to the things we could do to help keep our community and school safe: regularly hand washing and we demonstrated again how to hand wash effectively including using the right amount of soap.

We also discussed how jokes and games about coronavirus may make other people feel and that they should be avoided.

What became clear during the assembly was that all of the children had some understanding of the coronavirus outbreak but they all had a limited understanding of what it means for them. For some of our children this is a worry for them and they need some reassurance. We will answer questions honestly and appropriately at school but what would make a real difference is that families have honest and reassuring conversations at home as well.

Our children are worried about:

Coronavirus and elderly relatives

Pets

Holidays

Parents at work

Again, when each of these came up during our assembly we talked about the low risk for most people.

The CBBC website linked to this page is really useful as a starting point for discussion at home. It is better to tackle the conversation directly rather than assume that, because a child isn't talking about coronavirus, they aren't worrying about it.

In terms of school and operations, we have had no new guidance from The Department of Education or Public Health England and as such we are carrying on as normal. If there is anything we need to inform parents of we will use "SchoolComms" to send out messages – it is vital that we have up to date contact details for families. We are contingency planning, as many other organisations are, but I'm sure you can appreciate that any contingency planning is fluid against a continually evolving situation.

As always, your support is hugely appreciated; it is at times like this that I am grateful for our school community!

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Yours sincerely,

Mr King