

PRESS RELEASE

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Department of Education Continues to Support Children and the Wider Community

The Department of Education is now in the second week of its Primary home learning programme and in its first week of rolling out a similar programme at Secondary level.

Children in all of our 11 Primary schools together with students in the secondary sector, have access to a programme which will support our children and their parents by providing them with a structured learning routine which enables children to continue to develop key skills. The activities delivered through the programme are designed to work within a home learning environment and are not aimed at replicating the classroom environment. The principal goal behind the Department of Education's home learning provision is to provide our community's children with a familiar structure and sense of purpose. During times of trauma, feelings of a lack of control can lead to anxiety and hopelessness. Through the use of positive psychology principles, children will be encouraged to spend time on positive experiences; engage actively with a series of tasks; continue to connect and develop their relationships with others; have a meaningful sense of community; and experience accomplishment.

Teachers and staff at the Department of Education have been very busy getting these home learning programmes off the ground and ensuring a smooth and successful roll-out. This has not been an easy feat but it has been extremely rewarding to see the fruits of the hard work pay off as we enable the children in our community to connect with their peers and their teachers, and resume their learning journey, albeit in a very different format.

Teachers who are working from home continue to plan and put into effect the activities that children are undertaking, as well as interacting with children through the electronic platforms. Activities involve varied tasks, which include drawing/creating and taking photographs or short videos demonstrating a skill, alongside more traditional writing and recording. These live electronic interactions that occur daily between children and teachers allow teachers to clarify any queries children might have in relation to the activities and also reinforce a sense of connection and continuity which will contribute towards children's resilience. Children working from home are asked to check in with their teacher(s) at the beginning of each day. A series of suggested activities are shared with the children via the electronic platform. Children can then complete these at their



own pace over the course of the day and share the outcomes of these (via photo / text / video / etc) with their teachers and receive feedback. They then check out at the end of the day.

In addition to the home learning programmes, the Department of Education is providing key workers who are parents and their children with an invaluable service. We have 4 facilities which are open and provide a safe environment primarily for children whose parents are not otherwise able to make suitable childcare provision without involving relatives over the age of 70 years. St Martin's School continues to open its door for its pupils and we have 3 'new' facilities based at Notre Dame, St Anne's and Westside. These 3 facilities include crèche facilities for children under school age and extended hours supervision for parents who require this service, with doors open from 07:30 to 20:30. The child supervision service is being provided 7 days a week and includes weekends and the dates which would previously have been school holidays. Although numbers vary from day to day and are, understandably, dependent on parent's shifts, we have around 160 children attending our facilities every day. In order to minimise the potential exposure of the virus to staff and children, we are operating in a very different manner and ensuring children work within small groups to ensure as much social distancing as is possible and appropriate within this environment. A high level of personal hygiene is reinforced through hand washing routines and other strategies. A higher intensity and frequency of cleaning, in particular of surfaces and of frequently touched items such as door handles and banisters, has also been implemented.

In order to cater for these new services, the Department of Education has redeployed many of their teachers, LSAs, secretaries, school attendants and cleaners from all the schools that have closed in a shift system. A rota arrangement has been put into effect, to ensure we always have teachers available at home to continue planning the Home Learning programme; to continue with its 'live' delivery; and to supervise the children who are attending the facilities we have open. The rota also ensures that the Department of Education is managing the needs of the system and ensuring the extended hours and weekend shifts are covered in the facilities which are open, whilst also building in periods of respite for staff, as well as keeping the level of exposure as low as possible for these frontline staff. In order to be able to manage this effectively, a high level of supervision is provided by a number of teachers who are dedicated to small groups of children.

As is evident, although our schools are closed, there is still much to be done and the staff at the Department of Education are very busy indeed! The Department of Education is very grateful to all of its employees for their willingness to be flexible and for adapting to this very different way of working. Staff have truly risen to the challenge and are working together to provide for our children - both those at home and those attending the facilities - in the best possible manner.

NOTE TO EDITORS

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

IF YOU ARE SENDING YOUR CHILDREN TO OUR FACILITIES:

We remind you to please send your child with a packed lunch, a water bottle, some snacks and anything else you feel it would be appropriate for them to have with them*.

*If your child is in our crèche facility and still uses nappies, please send them with wipes, nappies and a change of clothes.



From this last weekend (Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th April) onwards, the only facility that will be open at the weekend will be the St Anne's facility. This is open to children who usually attend any of the 3 facilities (Notre Dame; St Anne's and Westside) and is also open both to children who use the crèche facility and who require extended hours supervision.

Please note the following information if your child attends the Notre Dame facility (Monday to Friday) and you make use of our extended hours supervision:

- If you drop off your child before 08:30, your child should be dropped off at the St Anne's facility entrance.
- If you collect your child after 15:30, you should collect your child from the St Anne's facility entrance.
- If you drop off / collect your child between the hours of 08:30 and 15:30, please do this at the Notre Dame facility.

IF YOUR CHILD IS AT HOME:

All parents who have not yet signed their children up to the Home Learning platform are urged to visit www.education.gov.gi at their earliest opportunity and follow the steps specified in the 'Home Learning' section of the website.

Parents are asked to contact the Department of Education if they have any queries or concerns. This can be done by emailing the team at homelearningcodes@education.gov.gi . If children are concerned, they can call us on 200 12499 or they can submit a form (accessible through the 'Student' page of the website).