



Coalway Early Years
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Dear Parents/Carers,

Latest Update – COVID-19/Coronavirus

The Government announced yesterday evening that all schools, colleges and early years settings in the UK will be closed from **3.00pm Friday 20th March 2020** to most pupils. Where possible, settings will remain open for the children of 'key workers' and for children categorised as 'vulnerable' (that is, any children subject to an EHCP plan or having the involvement of a social worker).

'Key Workers' include health service professionals, police, fire-fighters, social care workers, school and early years staff, workers involved in providing essential services, supermarket and food manufacturing workers, and some delivery drivers. A full list of the 'key worker' categories is expected to be published by the Cabinet later today and we will forward this to you as soon as it is available.

All other children who do not fall into one of these categories must remain at home with appropriate care. The Government has stated that children should not be left with elderly relatives or vulnerable people and as such alternate arrangements should be made.

At 'Coalway Early Years' we are able to remain open for children who fall into the categories above. We therefore need parents who fall into the 'key worker' category to contact us as soon as possible by email or telephone to let us know your intention to bring your child/ren into playgroup from next week, and which hours you require. We are working closely with 'Kid's Club' to try to ensure that extended care for children from the age of 3 years remains available. As our numbers are likely to be fairly low, we anticipate that we will be able to offer you any hours you need Monday to Friday between 9am and 3pm for the duration of the closure. Nursery funding will continue for those who are eligible, and for additional non-funded hours our hourly rates will be frozen until September 2020 at £4.50 for 3/4 year olds and £4.75 for 2 year olds.

We will continue to operate within our normal daily routines and provide the usual high standards of care and education for these children. Please note that from a practical point of view it is likely that we will operate a mixed age room, and the measures we have put in place this week to minimise the spread of infection will remain in place.

We appreciate that for those of you who do not fall into these categories this may feel like a daunting time and you may be worried about your child's education during this time. We intend to support you with this as much as we possibly can within the restrictions imposed upon us. Here are the measures we currently plan to put in place – these will no doubt evolve and change as this situation develops:

- We will set up a closed Facebook group for parents/carers to join so that you can share ideas, photographs and chat with each other in a safe environment. We will continue to post announcements on our public Facebook page.
- Your children's key workers will interact with you on a weekly basis via your Tapestry account, sharing ideas, posting photographs and videos with activity ideas, answering your questions and supporting you with ideas to help your child's development.

- Whilst we cannot operate our usual physical 'open door' policy, we will operate a virtual 'open door' one instead. This means that we will be available for questions, support and advice daily via our email bcplaygroup@btinternet.com.
- We will post regular ideas for activities and links to learning on both our website and Facebook pages.
- Within the next two weeks we hope to have put together some 'activity packs' that can be collected from the playgroup for you to do at home with your child. We will, of course, take every precaution with these packs, making sure that they are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before being passed on to new families – more details about this idea will follow at a later date.
- We will be open every day so you will still be able to call us for a chat at anytime. We will of course keep you updated with developments in respect of this situation at every stage.

If anyone has any other ideas for how you would like to be supported during this difficult period please do not hesitate to get in touch.

We also appreciate that keeping the children entertained and stimulated at home over an extended period of time can be very challenging, so here are a few ideas to get you started and to help you to continue your child's learning:

- Get your child to help with daily chores such as setting the table, writing a shopping list, tidying up and include opportunities to count, sort, match and use lots of language.
- Find an old washing up bowl or shallow plastic tub and provide a range of sensory play – rice, porridge oats, pasta, flour, bubbly water. Add some different sized containers, jugs and spoons. Don't forget to supervise young children with this type of activity.
- Do some baking with the children or make simple play-dough (see attached recipe).
- Give your child some paper, a glue stick, scissors (if age appropriate and supervised) and some old magazines or flyers for a cutting and sticking activity.
- Make sure you get outside (safely, based on Government guidance) – play in the garden with a football, set up a simple obstacle course, or go for a walk in the woods (you could make a 'treasure hunt' list of things to find).

We will support you with lots of other ideas over the coming weeks. I have attached an ideas book supplied by 'Consortium' (one of our educational resources suppliers) which includes a simple play-dough recipe.

We will continue to keep you updated as the situation progresses. In the meantime, we wish all of you and your families the very best of our wishes. We will keep in touch and hope to bring our lovely playgroup community back together very soon.

Stay safe and take care.

Kind regards,

Marie Ridgway, Manager
Coalway Early Years

