



St. Jérôme Church of England Bilingual Primary School

Headteacher: Revd. Daniel Norris MBA NPQH
120 – 138 Station Road Harrow Middlesex HA1 2DJ
www.stjeromebilingual.org

Tel: 020 3019 6363 e-mail: office@stjeromebilingual.org



To: All Parents / Carers

2nd March 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

Graphic images and footage of Russia's invasion of Ukraine aren't easy for anyone to process, but they may be especially difficult for children and young people.

As adults our first instinct may be to shield children from the violence unfolding on television and social media, but research shows that acknowledging and discussing conflict, rather than ignoring it, can reduce anxiety and create an openness for questioning.

Please be assured that the staff team are here to help and support you. We will be keeping a very close eye on conversations taking place in school and will provide the children with the opportunity to share their worries or concerns with us. Each class has a worry box and we will actively encourage children to use these boxes to ask questions or seek reassurance.

Any whole class discussions will happen, when and if needed, in an age-appropriate way. Experts at Save the Children have produced helpful tools and tips that caregivers can use to approach the conversation with children and we thought it may be helpful to share these with you.

1. MAKE TIME AND LISTEN WHEN YOUR CHILD WANTS TO TALK

Give children the space to tell you what they know, how they feel and to ask you questions. They may have formed a completely different picture of the situation than you have. Take the time to listen to what they think, and what they have seen or heard. This may avoid telling them more than is necessary.

2. TAILOR THE CONVERSATION TO THE CHILD

Be mindful of the child's age as you approach the conversation with them. Young children may not understand what conflict or war means and require an age-appropriate explanation. Be careful not to over-explain the situation or go into too much detail as this can make children unnecessarily anxious. Younger children may be satisfied just by understanding that sometimes countries fight. Older children are more likely to understand what war means but may still benefit from talking with you about the situation. In fact, older children will often be more concerned by talk of war because they tend to understand the dangers better than younger children do.

3. VALIDATE THEIR FEELINGS

It is important that children feel supported in the conversation. They should not feel judged or have their concerns dismissed. When children have the chance to have an open and honest conversation about things upsetting them, it can create a sense of relief and safety.

4. REASSURE THEM THAT ADULTS ALL OVER THE WORLD (INCLUDING MANY IN RUSSIA) ARE WORKING HARD TO RESOLVE THIS SITUATION

Remind children that this is not their problem to solve. They should not feel guilty about playing, seeing their friends, and doing the things that make them happy. Stay calm when you approach the conversation. Children often copy the sentiments of their caregivers – if you are uneasy about the situation, chances are your child will be uneasy as well. We need children to understand that there are differences of opinion about the conflict and we cannot be sure that everyone living in the same country agrees about what is happening. Sometimes information we hear is not true and we can also be quick to assume what others believe.

5. GIVE THEM A PRACTICAL WAY TO HELP

Support children who want to help. Children who have the opportunity to help those affected by the conflict can feel like they are part of the solution. Children can fundraise for charities that are providing support, or create drawings or prayers for peace.

You may also find it helpful to watch the following short summary film produced by BBC Newsround which describes the current crisis for children of primary age.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/60554258>

We are aware that members of our school community have friends and family who are directly impacted by the current situation in Ukraine and the surrounding countries and would therefore encourage sensitivity in our communication with one another as we seek to offer our support to all those who are in distress.

Please do not hesitate to be in contact with the school if you feel we could help and support you or your family or if you have any concerns.

We continue to pray for all who are involved in this conflict and to pray for peace.

Yours sincerely,

Revd Daniel Norris
Headteacher