

Tuesday 8 March 2022

Dear Parents

RE. Conflict in Eastern Europe

We yet again find ourselves in a world situation that is far from ideal, is scary and is all over the news. I know as parents many of you will find yourselves feeling worried and confused too and this may lead you to not to talk to your children about this difficult topic.

I write today to suggest that you talk to your children in an age appropriate way. In an age where the news is all around us and in conversation on social media: Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat we need to ensure that our children receive difficult or troubling news from a source that is accurate, age appropriate and in the presence of someone that cares for them either you or us.

“What do you know about the news?” Is a helpful phrase to assess knowledge without inadvertently providing more than you wished. The phrase provides a sensible and easy approach to the news and allows you as a family to discuss things at a level appropriate to your own child/ren and in line with your own views.

For many of our older children (Years 4, 5 & 6) Newsround and the First News children’s newspaper are a regular part of our class work and discussion. We use these as a source that is targeted at primary age children and to inform them about events of the day which is even more important when these difficult events occur. We have taken a pause from using them to ensure that parents have had time to decide how they wish to respond to these events (there is further support below).

We have noticed that the older children are beginning to discuss these issues in the playground and feel that now is the time for us to approach it in class for Y4, Y5 & Y6. Therefore from next week we will be sharing these [slides](#) with the children in Y4, Y5 & Y6. These slides have been prepared by a company that creates resources for teachers in the UK to prompt impartial discussion on a challenging current issue. The slides enable children to understand what is currently happening in Ukraine, what is being done and what can we do.

These slides will be shared by the class teacher in the children’s classroom. This is so that children have the opportunity to talk about it with a trusted adult in an environment where they are used to having open and safe discussions. As is always the case, children will be discouraged from scaremongering each other but if all children are provided with a healthy open and honest discussion these instances will be limited.

If teachers in Y4, Y5 & Y6 feel like it is appropriate for the class, Newsround and articles in the First News children’s newspaper may also be shared. Any discussion, sharing of information will be done in an age appropriate way and these reassuring discussions will be followed up with support for any children that may be particularly upset.

With our younger children we will only talk about the events if the need arises and we see that children are beginning to talk about it or show their worries. We may ask open questions in class, such as 'Do you have any worries this week? What are they?' - and if events in Ukraine come up we will address them in an age appropriate way.

Over the coming days and weeks, we will continue to check in with all children, and all staff are keeping a close eye on our 'Trust Boxes', which are used as a confidential means of communication. Your child's class teacher will communicate with you if they feel your child needs more reassurance at home or if they are particularly worried. Parents can also speak directly to the class teacher about this matter if needed.

As a school we will continue to follow our school values of respect, responsibility and resilience and will be thinking of those displaced and in need or fear and will be ensuring that a respectful atmosphere remains in schools with no blame or discrimination to any groups.

More than a million people have fled their homes in the Ukraine, so we are inviting our Grange Park Community to make cash donations to the [UK's Disaster Emergency Committee's Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal](#) and/or donate basic supplies to our collection on **Monday 14 and Tuesday 15 March 2022** before and after school. There will be a stall set up by the front gates for you to drop off any donations of basic supplies from the list below. We will then organise for the donations to be taken to the North London Collection Point. From the collection point, vans run every 2-3 hours to Poland, where supplies are distributed across the border through pre-established corridors.

Our thoughts are with everyone in Ukraine, their relatives abroad, and anyone affected by the invasion, or any conflict globally, in any way.

Please refer below for further information and guidance to support you on how to talk to your child about what is happening.

With my best wishes to you and your family.

Tijen Hassan
Headteacher

Donating basic supplies to those who have fled their homes in Ukraine

We are looking for donations of the following:

- army first aid kits
- antiseptic wipes
- antiseptic alcohol
- masks (disposable and reusable)
- hemostatic bandage
- paper towels

- individual sterile dressings
- scissors for cutting clothes and shoes
- thermal blankets
- sleeping bags
- sleeping mats
- clothing (adult and children)
- toothpaste
- toothbrushes
- nappies (adult and children)
- sanitary pads (in packaging)
- underwear
- army or other battery torches
- solar phone chargers
- microfiber towels
- tableware and cutlery (reusable or disposable)
- energy bars/protein bars
- dried fruit
- bags for life and cardboard boxes to transport the goods in.

Please drop off any donations before or after school on **Monday 14 and Tuesday 15 March 2022**. There will be a stall set up by the front gates.

How to talk to your child about what's happening

No matter how calmly you manage the current environment, children are likely to be anxious. They will pick up bits of information from their friends, from the news and from listening to adults talking around them – but they can misunderstand what they're hearing. It's important to talk to them about what's happening.

Start by finding out what your child knows already

- Use open-ended questions to give them the chance to tell you what they think. See page 7 of the resource ['worrying about war'](#) for examples of questions to ask (you'll find the resource at the bottom of the page.)
- Tackle the news head-on and talk about it openly and calmly.
- Use real words and don't shy away from the truth. Be prepared to explain and define keywords they might be hearing to help them make sense of what's going on. For example, words like invasion, missiles, sanctions, refugees etc. Use age-appropriate material such as this [Newsround resource](#), which includes definitions.
- Stick to the facts.
- But don't discuss everything you hear. For example, be careful about talking about speculation around nuclear warfare. Reassure them that the chance of 'World War III' breaking out is highly unlikely.
- Educate them about reliable sources of information.
- Explain how some stories on social media may be based on rumours or inaccurate information.

- Use reliable news sources like Newsround, which is age-appropriate. Watch and discuss with your child this [Newsround video on spotting fake news about the crisis in Ukraine](#).
- Encourage your child to ask questions and share their feelings.
- Remember, it's OK not to have all the answers. Tell them that you'll let them know when you know more. This will be an ongoing discussion.
- Allow for repetition, you might have to answer the same thing again. Younger children in particular tend to repeat themselves when they're feeling uncertain or worried.
- Reassure them that they're not the only ones feeling this way and encourage them to share their feelings with you or their teacher.
- Be a role model.
- Recognise and manage your own worries first. If you notice you're feeling anxious, take some time to calm down before you decide to talk about the events with your child.
- Be open about sharing your feelings with your child – e.g. I'm also finding the news a bit worrying, so I'm doing X (baking cakes, going on long walks, swimming etc.), which helps me to relax.
- Encourage them to think about what they can do to relax.
- Reassure them and let them know it's normal to be concerned.
- Explain that we're not at war with Russia and that they don't need to worry about it happening in their neighbourhood. Reassure them they're safe and that the UK is taking steps to help the people of Ukraine.
- Encourage them to take breaks from listening to or reading the news – overexposure isn't helpful.
- Do something positive with your child.
- Organise an aid package to send to Ukraine. For example, donating to Grange Park's collection.
- Alternatively, [take a look at this article](#), which includes different ways you can help.
- Further resources on how to talk to children about the war in Ukraine:
 - [Tips for parents and caregivers on media coverage of traumatic events](#)
 - [Talking about Ukraine with our children](#)

If your child struggles with higher levels of anxiety

- Some children are naturally more anxious, such as those with existing phobias or obsessive-compulsive disorders. The current situation can make those anxieties worse. If you have relatives in the armed forces or in the regions (Ukraine, Russia, eastern/central Europe), your child might be susceptible to higher levels of anxiety.
- Get them to do activities such as counting, ordering and sorting tasks, which can help them calm down.
- Encourage them to use relaxation techniques such as controlled breathing.
- Help them stick to routines they know.
- Look out for obsessive or compulsive behaviours and try to get ahead of them early by challenging unhelpful thoughts and assumptions.
- If you're worried about your child's anxiety, YoungMinds is a charity dedicated to children's mental health. They have a [parents' helpline](#) for confidential, expert advice. You can reach them at 0808 802 5544.

Helplines and websites for children and young people

If your child would like to speak with someone confidentially, there are helplines and websites specifically for them.

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
Shout Free, confidential support via text, available 24/7	Text SHOUT to 85258 in the UK to text with a trained crisis volunteer who'll provide active listening and collaborative problem-solving
The Mix Free confidential telephone helpline and online service that aims to find young people the best help, whatever the problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call 0808 808 4994 for free (11am to 11pm daily) • Access the online community • Email The Mix
ChildLine Confidential telephone counselling service for any child with a problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call 0800 1111 any time for free • Have an online chat with a counsellor (9am to midnight daily) • Check out the message boards

Help us tackle racism and bullying related to the events

Our school values respect, responsibility and resilience among children. We want to maintain these values during this difficult time. If you hear your child saying or doing hurtful things linked to the events happening in Ukraine, such as generalising that all Russians are bad and want a war, you can use the following examples to help dispel such misconceptions:

- Explain that the decision to invade Ukraine was made by the Russian government and its leader, Vladimir Putin, not the Russian people. People don't always agree with the things their governments do.
- Explain that the vast majority of people that live in Russia:
 - Want peace with Ukraine, they don't want war
 - Enjoy living in their country, much like you and I
- Talk about the Russian people who have protested in Russia against the war. Explain how many of them have been arrested and risked their lives doing this because their country doesn't allow its people the freedom to protest peacefully if it goes against government decisions. This is in contrast to the British values we have in our country.
- Remind them it's not OK to say 'I don't like Russia/Russians' but instead encourage your child to think about this in terms of 'I don't like what the Russian army is doing'.