



Fleet Primary School

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War in Ukraine

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Dear parents and carers,

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is distressing and concerning, and we know that our children may have questions or be seeking reassurance. This week in school some of the older children's classes have discussed what is going on and had the chance to ask questions and watch newsround reports and other child oriented content about it.

Parents are well placed to talk to children about the images they are seeing and help them navigate the concepts and issues this brings up, but we are also aware that it raises issues that parents may never have encountered before. Although challenging, these conversations are extremely important. They give parents an opportunity to help their children feel more secure and understand the world in which they live.

Global charities operating in the UK and Ukraine are appealing for funds to offer aid in the humanitarian crisis. For example, Unicef, the UN's children's charity, is helping to ensure families have clean water and food and that child health and protection services continue and Save the Children, which is providing cash assistance, food and other support to refugees crossing into Romanian and Lithuania, as well as in Ukraine itself. There are some local North London organisations asking for donations which they will be sending across to help. This link in the Ham & High has some details should you wish to help or donate:

<https://www.hamhigh.co.uk/news/ukraine-donations-support-charities-8732082>

General advice to support your child would be:

Listen to Children:

- Create a time and place for children to ask their questions. Do not force children to talk about things until they're ready.
- Remember that children can sometimes personalise situations. For example, they may worry about friends or relatives who live in a city or state associated with incidents or events.
- Help children find ways to express themselves. Some children may not be able to talk about their thoughts, feelings, or fears. They may be more comfortable drawing pictures, playing with toys, or writing stories or poems directly or indirectly related to current events.

Answer Children's Questions:

- Use words and concepts which are age appropriate and do not overload a child with too much information.
- Give children honest answers and information.
- Be prepared to repeat explanations or have several conversations. Some information may be hard to accept or understand. Asking the same question over and over may be your child's way of asking for reassurance.
- Acknowledge and support your child's thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Let your child know that you think their questions and concerns are important.
- Be consistent and reassuring, but don't make unrealistic promises.
- Use the opportunity to teach tolerance and explain prejudice.
- Remember that children learn from watching their parents and teachers. They are very interested in how you respond to events. They learn from listening to your conversations with other adults.

- Let children know how you are feeling. It's alright for them to know if you are anxious or worried about events. However, do not burden them with your concerns.
- Do not confront your child's way of handling events. If a child feels reassured by saying that things are happening very far away, it is usually best not to disagree. The child may need to think about events this way to feel safe.

Provide Support:

- Restrict images of scenes that are too graphic or disturbing especially to young children.
- Help children establish a predictable routine and schedule. Children are reassured by structure and familiarity. School, sports, birthdays and group activities take on added importance during stressful times.
- Let school know about the child's specific fears or concerns if they appear to be overwhelming them.
- Children who have experienced trauma or losses may show more intense reactions to tragedies or news of war or terrorist incidents. These children may need extra support and attention.
- Watch for physical symptoms related to stress. Many children show anxiety and stress through complaints of physical aches and pains.
- Help children communicate with others and express themselves at home. Some children may want to write letters to express themselves or they may wish to paint or draw to express feelings.
- Let children be children. They may not want to think or talk a lot about these events. It is alright if they would rather play or ride their bike, etc.

Other resources which might be helpful for parents include:

1. [Advice if you are upset by the news](#) from BBC Newsround
2. [7 ways to support children and young people who are worried](#)
3. [Anxiety resources from Childline \(primary and secondary\)](#)
4. [Anxiety thermometer \(primary and secondary\)](#)
5. [Getting through a tough time](#)
6. [Understanding stress \(primary\)](#)
7. [The Power of Kindness \(primary and secondary\)](#)
8. [Help for teachers and families to talk to pupils about Russia's invasion of Ukraine and how to avoid misinformation](#)

War is not easy for anyone to comprehend or accept. Understandably, many young children can feel confused, upset, and anxious. Parents, carers and teachers can help by listening and responding in an honest, consistent, and supportive manner. We will continue to address questions and cover the conflict as it unfolds in an age appropriate way in school and are here to offer any advice or support you may need.

Yours sincerely,



Don McGibbon
Headteacher