



A guide to supporting your child's wellbeing in school

Helping your child thrive in school goes beyond learning and education. it's about supporting their overall wellbeing too. This guide aims to help you with practical tips and advice on how you can be there for your child, helping them navigate the ups and downs of school life – from managing anxiety to building healthy habits, to supporting your child's mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing.

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Healthy eating

Supporting your child's food choices is a big part of helping them to eat healthy and feel good. This does not mean having to shop and cook from scratch all the time. Try encouraging them to explore different foods. Maybe let them join in with planning and cooking meals when you can.

By showing interest in what they like, and with positive reinforcement, you are helping them build confidence in making healthy decisions. Keeping things relaxed and positive around meals can make a real difference in developing good, lifelong eating habits. Try to encourage mindful eating with your child and avoid eating in front of screens.



There are plenty of ways to help your child eat well and stay healthy at school.

- If they have packed lunches, try to include a mix of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein.
- Encourage them to drink water throughout the day instead of sugary drinks. This also helps to prevent constipation.
- Talk to them about making smart choices in the cafeteria, like picking a variety of options and including colour on their plate. For example, opting for a jacket potato instead of chips every day and including a portion of vegetables with their meal.
- It's also helpful to establish a good breakfast routine at home, avoiding sugary foods such as pain au chocolat or crepes, so they start the day energised and focused.
- Limit but don't ban sugary foods from their diet. For example, if your child has a chocolate bar for a snack one day, try an alternate the next day, like fruit or popcorn.
- Most importantly, keep the conversation positive — celebrate their healthy choices and make it fun!

There is a range of NHS support available from [healthier lunch ideas](#) to [healthy food swaps](#) and much more. Visit [healthier families](#) for more information.

Talking to your child about their weight can be a sensitive topic, but it's important to approach it with care and understanding. Focus on health rather than numbers, emphasising how good nutrition, regular activity, and balanced habits can help them feel strong and energetic. There's [more advice](#) on our Padlet.

Physical activity

Supporting your child to be active can be both fun and rewarding. You can set a positive example with physical activities as a family, whether a stroll around the block after dinner, football in the garden or walking to school, even if only some of the way. Encourage your child to find activities they enjoy, like dancing, swimming, or playing a game with friends.

Being active helps children in many ways, including in school.

- Regular movement helps improve concentration and memory, making it easier to pay attention and do well in class.
- It also gives them more energy, builds resilience and communication skills, and helps to manage stress and anxiety – which can boost mood and overall mental health.
- Active children often sleep better and get sick less often, which means they are more likely to be present and engaged at school. There are lots of different kinds of physical activity, such as walking, swimming, and cycling.



The mental health charity [Mind](#) has some good ideas for activities your child could try.

Sleep



We know bedtime can be a challenge, but supporting your child's sleep is crucial for their overall wellbeing. It is so important to keep going, even when you feel like giving in.

To help your child get good sleep, try these tips:

- Set a regular bedtime and stick to it, so they know when it's time to wind down.
- Use the wind down time as a time to talk about their day. This can help relieve anxiety before they go to sleep.
- Create a cosy and quiet sleep space that's cool and dark.
- Limit screen time and heavy snacks before bed, as these can make it harder to fall asleep.
- Encourage children to be active during the day, to help them sleep better at night.
- If they have trouble sleeping, offer comfort and reassurance to help them feel safe and calm.

There's more [local advice](#) online and from [Mind](#), the mental health charity.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness can help children to manage stress and anxiety, improve their focus and understand their emotions better. By practicing mindfulness, children can learn to pay attention to the present moment, which can make it easier for them to stay calm and focused in school and at home.

There are some simple things that all the family can try at home, to boost your mood and keep you happy.

[BBC Children In Need](#) has more information and ideas on this topic, as does [BBC Bitesize](#) and the [NHS](#).



Fun and wellbeing

Play is really important for children because it helps them learn and grow. It lets them use their imagination, solve problems, and get along with others. Playing also helps them stay active and healthy. It makes them feel happy and relaxed, and it strengthens their friendships. Overall, play is a key part of helping children develop. [Greater Manchester Combined Authority](#) has some more tips on this topic.



Spotting the signs of bullying

To spot signs of bullying, look out for these clues:

- Changes in behaviour, like becoming withdrawn or anxious.
- Physical signs, such as unexplained bruises or torn clothing.
- Pay attention if your child suddenly avoids certain places or activities they used to enjoy.
- Changes in their school performance or sleep patterns might also indicate they're struggling.

If they seem unusually upset or nervous about going to school, it's worth talking to them gently to understand what might be going on. Being attentive and open can help you spot and address bullying early. The [Anti-Bullying Alliance](#) has further help and information.

Staying safe online

We know that children love to play online games and enjoy the likes of YouTube and TikTok, but it's essential that they are safe when doing so. To support your child with online safety, start by having open and honest conversations about their online activities, as they do not always understand the risks.

Explain the importance of keeping personal information private and being cautious about what they share online, including photos of themselves. Encourage them to use strong, unique passwords and to regularly update them. Set clear guidelines for their internet use and discuss which sites and apps are appropriate.

The charitable trust SWGfL has some [useful resources](#) including around [sexting incidents](#).

Early Years – Starting school

Getting your child ready for school in the early years can be fun and easy with a few simple steps. Start by creating a consistent daily routine so your child knows what to expect. Help them get used to simple tasks like dressing themselves, packing their bag, and following a schedule. Visual timetables can be great for this and promote independence.

Encourage them to explore and learn through play to build their skills and confidence. Talk about school positively to get them excited and ready. And make sure they get plenty of rest and a healthy breakfast to start their day off right.



Primary school

Supporting your child in primary school can make a big difference in their success and happiness. Stay involved by helping with homework and keeping in touch with their teachers to track progress. Encourage a routine at home that includes time for reading, play, and rest. Be positive about their school experience and celebrate their achievements, no matter how small. Listen to their concerns and offer support when they face challenges.

Supporting your child's school attendance if they are feeling anxious can be challenging, but there are effective ways to help. Start by talking to your child about their feelings and listen without judgment. Work with their teacher to create a plan that makes them feel more comfortable and supported.



If your child is unable to go to school, the charity [Young Minds](#) has advice on supporting them and working with the school and other services. The [Trafford Directory](#) details the services available locally.

More support for your child in primary school

Place2Be's [Parenting Smart](#) is a site for parents and carers of 4 to 11-year-olds, offering practical advice on supporting your child and managing behaviour. Designed with busy parents in mind, the site has short videos and articles on topics from meltdowns to bullying, sleeping difficulties to self confidence.

Calm Connections is running Thank Thursday sessions, a [space on Facebook](#) to ask questions around children's and young people's mental health. As parents working at Calm Connections, we share our wisdom gained from supporting our children as well as inviting guests to provide tips, ideas, experiences plus a reminder of self care, to help you better support your family.

Grab a brew and join us every Thursday, at 4.30pm, as we cover a range of mental health subjects including transitions, anxiety, grief and loss, and emotionally based non-school attendance.

Secondary school

Transitioning from primary to secondary school is a big change for children, and your support can make a huge difference. Start by talking openly about the new school, addressing any concerns they might have. Visit the school together if possible, so they can become familiar with the environment.

Help them plan their route to school whether its walking, cycling or a bus journey, and practise this with them. Help them get organised by setting up a system for managing homework and school supplies. Encourage them to get involved in extracurricular activities – maybe arts, culture or sport related – to make new friends, try new things, and feel more connected. Keep communication open and check in regularly about how they're feeling and adjusting. The charity [Young Minds](#) has tips to help with this.



Exam stress support for 11 to 18-year-olds

Supporting your child through exam stress in secondary school is crucial for their wellbeing and success. Exams can come with a lot of pressure. Help them break down their study tasks into manageable chunks and find a strategy that works for them.

Encourage regular breaks to avoid burnout. Teach them relaxation techniques, like deep breathing or mindfulness, to manage stress. Ensure they get enough sleep, eat well, and stay active, as these habits can improve focus and reduce anxiety.

Keep the lines of communication open, offering encouragement and reassurance, and avoid putting extra pressure on them. Being supportive and understanding during this time can help your child feel more confident and prepared. The mental health charity [Mind](#) has more insight on this topic and [Young Minds](#) has advice on wellbeing at this time.



Further support for your secondary school child



[Kooth](#) is an online emotional wellbeing and mental health support service for young people in Trafford aged 11 to 25.



[42nd Street](#) promotes a range of approaches to support young people's mental health needs.

What to do in a crisis

If you or someone you know are experiencing a mental health crisis and need urgent help, please contact the Mental Health Crisis Line on Freephone **0800 051 3253**.

If you are worried about your child self-harming, the charity [Young Minds](#) has a useful guide.

[Papyrus](#) has a 24/7 Hopeline for young people to call if they need support with their mental health, on **0800 068 4141**.

[Trafford Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service](#) (CAMHS) provides emotional and mental health assessment and treatment to children and young people aged up to 18, and their families and carers.

Dynamic Support Database (DSD) is used to identify children and young people aged up to 18 with Autism (diagnosed) and/or learning disabilities, who present with challenging behaviour and are at significant risk of admission to a Tier 4 hospital and/or residential placement. The DSD is used by professionals to monitor risk and offer support to children, young people, and their families. More information for parents can be found on the [Trafford Directory](#).



Support for your whole family

Trafford Council offers Solihull online parenting modules, with a range of support for both parents and young people. They allow parents and carers access and support at a time that suits them, and can be completed at your own pace. Some of the courses available can be found below. Use code WATERPARK to access.

Understanding your teenager's brain

This course can help you to understand and read their behaviours and how you might best support them in this critical period. The relationship you share remains one of the most important for nurturing their wellbeing and helping them to thrive as kind, sociable and resilient people throughout their lives.

Moving up to secondary school for children with additional needs

This short specialist course is for parents, relatives or friends of children who have additional needs. Your child may be dyspraxic, dyslexic, very anxious, autistic, really dislike change, have ADHD, a learning disability, a physical disability or any other additional need. It is designed to support both you and them as they transition into secondary school. Building on the principles of nurturing emotional wellbeing shaped by the Solihull Approach, the course will help you to develop your communication and support their development.

Understanding your child's mental health and wellbeing

This course will help you to tune into how you can help your child or teenager process their emotions effectively and also understand mental health difficulties such as depression, anxiety and self-harm.

Understanding your child's feelings (a taster course)

The important relationships in your child's life help shape their emotional health and wellbeing. This transformative course offers a reflective space to think about your child's feelings and how this relates to their behaviour.

Understanding your child with additional needs

This specialist course for parents, relatives or friends of children with additional needs is designed to support you to better understand their world and how the important relationship you share can enable them to thrive. Building on the principles of nurturing emotional wellbeing shaped by the Solihull Approach, the course will help you to read and manage behaviour, develop your communication and support their development.

Understanding your child: from toddler to teenager

No matter your family setup, the important relationships in your child's life help shape their emotional health and wellbeing. This transformative course offers a reflective space to think about your child's development, their behaviour and how they are communicating.

Fear-Less Triple P

This online course is designed to support parents to manage children's anxiety more effectively. It is for parent carers of children and young people aged 6 to 14 years. Email online.parenting@trafford.gov.uk to get your code.

Trafford Council has a range of Padlets, which are full of information and details of services available to support you and your family in Trafford. Padlets are like online bulletin boards with text, images, videos, files, links, and more.

[Start for life, for families with children aged up to five years old](#)

[Mental health and emotional wellbeing](#)

[Family help](#)

[Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\).](#)

Finally, life as a parent can be difficult. Remember to look after yourself as well as your children. Locally, [Bluesci](#) brings a lot of activities together for the people of Trafford, with a focus on health and wellbeing for adults. [BBC Parents' Toolkit](#) also has support on this topic.



Trafford Council

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