

Spring Term: Sleep Support

Last term, as part of our work supporting children's mental health, we asked them a range of questions about how they were feeling. Children were given a variety of statements which they rated in terms of 'never' happening to them, 'sometimes' happening or 'always' happening.

Two of the questions involved sleep habits with the following results:

Statement	Never	Sometimes	Always
I have problems sleeping	58	42	48
I wake up in the night	41	57	50

From the outcomes of the survey, a considerable number of children in school are reporting that they have problems sleeping, or that they regularly wake up during the night.

Getting enough sleep is essential for primary-aged children, as it helps them stay focused, ready to learn, and better able to manage their emotions throughout the school day. A good night's sleep supports healthy growth, strengthens the immune system, and improves memory—making it easier for children to retain new skills and information. When children are well rested, they are happier, more resilient, and more engaged in their learning.

Establishing a consistent bedtime routine can make a big difference in helping your child feel their best each day.

What do sleep issues look like?

- Your child is unable/unwilling to settle
- Your child cannot sleep
- Your child disrupts others at night
- Your child wakes up very early
- Your child leaves their room at night
- Your child has nightmares
- Your child sleepwalks

How many hours of sleep do kids need?

Age	Recommended sleep
3 to 5 years old	10 - 13 hours a night
6 to 12 years old	9 - 12 hours a night

Why this might happen

Lots of young children find it difficult to settle down to sleep and will wake up during the night and for some children this may not be a problem. Insomnia, bedtime fears, night terrors, sleepwalking, and bed-wetting can all disrupt your child's natural sleep pattern. Some children may not feel tired at their designated bedtime while others have trouble falling asleep without a parent present. Some kids will frequently wake up in the middle of night, suddenly wide awake, and either toss and turn or come and wake up mum and dad.

It can be frustrating to have your own sleep regularly disturbed and then find yourself having to rush around in the morning because your child's late getting up, or having to deal with a fussy, moody child who's low on sleep. But there is hope!

Many childhood sleep problems are linked to daytime behaviour and bedtime habits that you can work with your child to change. With a little patience and discipline, you can help your child overcome their sleep difficulties, help them fall and stay asleep—and get back on track to more restful nights of your own.

If your child will not go to bed

- Decide what time you want your child to go to bed.
- Start a "winding down" bedtime routine around 30 minutes before the time that your child usually falls asleep. Bring this forward by 5 to 10 minutes each week – or 15 minutes if your child is in the habit of going to bed very late – until you get to the bedtime you want.
- Set a limit on how much time you spend with your child when you put them to bed. For example, read only 1 story, then tuck your child in and say goodnight.
- Give your child their favourite toy or comforter before settling into bed.
- Leave a dim light on if necessary.
- If your child gets up, keep taking them back to bed again with as little fuss as possible.
- Try to be consistent. Make sure you have a calming, predictable bedtime routine that happens at the same time and includes the same things every night.
- If your child complains that they're hungry at night, try giving them a bowl of cereal and milk before bed (make sure you brush their teeth afterwards).
- If your child is afraid of the dark, consider using a nightlight or leaving a landing light on.
- Do not let your child look at laptops, tablets or phones in the 30 to 60 minutes before bed – the light from screens can interfere with sleep.
- If your child wakes up during the night, be as boring as possible to avoid exciting them and leave lights off.
- **You may have to repeat routines for several nights.**

Additional support

If you feel that you would like some more support or to talk to someone about sleep issues your child may be having, we have booked a Sleep Workshop with Alixandra Lewis from Norfolk County Council on Thursday 26th March between 9-10.30.

Please notify the main office on office@freeschoolnorwich.org.uk to let us know you would like to come.

Kind regards,
Darren

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