

HEXHAM FIRST SCHOOL

Safeguarding Newsletter (2)

Dear Mums, Dads and Carers,

Welcome to our second safeguarding newsletter this year. Each half term we will share this newsletter as a way of sharing advice and support to help keep children safe both at school and at home. At Hexham First School, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility and our top priority. Everything that we do has the children at its centre. Their wellbeing, their safety, their achievement and their happiness underpins every decision we make.

Who is the safeguarding team at Hexham First School ?

Our designated safeguarding leads are: Mrs Overton and Miss Barton. Our safeguarding link governor is Mrs Armstrong, our Chair of Governors. The Safeguarding Team oversee and co-ordinate all aspects of the school's work to ensure that children are kept safe. They regularly attend training to ensure their skills and knowledge are up to date. All can be contacted via the office or by telephone on: 01434 603467

What are AI chatbots?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbots – such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini and others are becoming more common in everyday life. Children may encounter them at school, in games or even through websites and apps. While these tools can be useful and fun, it's important for parents to understand how they work, the potential risks and how to keep children safe. AI chatbots are computer programmes that can hold a conversation with a person.

They can:

- answer questions (e.g. helping with homework or explaining a tricky topic).
- spark creativity (e.g. helping write a poem, story or quiz). support hobbies and interests (e.g. generating recipe ideas, sports facts or coding tips).
- provide entertainment (e.g. riddles, jokes or role-play style games). Used wisely, chatbots can be a helpful tool for learning and fun.

When conversations can become concerning

Although conversations may start out innocent, there are risks to be aware of:

Unpredictable responses: chatbots sometimes give inaccurate, confusing or inappropriate information.

Role-play risks: a child may ask the chatbot to pretend to be a friend, character or even a parent figure. This can blur the line between fantasy and reality.

Sensitive topics: children may explore personal worries with a chatbot and the answers they receive might not always be supportive, accurate or safe.

Over-reliance: a child might start turning to a chatbot for advice instead of trusted adults.

Key message:

AI chatbots can be a useful tool, but they are not a replacement for safe, supportive human relationships. With guidance, supervision and open conversations, parents can help children explore this technology in a safe and balanced way.

Spotlight on Sleep

Like everyone, children need sleep and it's really important they get it (both for them & you). Sometimes getting them to sleep is tricky, but a predictable routine can help. A child who is getting enough sleep is more likely to be happy and alert than a child who isn't.

Getting your child into a good sleeping pattern isn't just about avoiding tantrums though, lack of sleep has been linked to future problems, such as anxiety, depression, obesity and high blood pressures.

Top tip:

Turn off screens an hour before bedtime. Audiobooks or good old-fashioned paper books are a good alternative to eBooks. Light from screens stops the production of the sleep hormone melatonin.

For children, sleep plays a crucial role due to the significant changes happening in their bodies and minds.

Here are some key reasons highlighting the importance of sleep:

- Physical growth and development: Sleep triggers the release of growth hormones necessary for physical growth.
- Brain development: Quality sleep is essential for brain development, especially in areas related to decision-making, impulse control and emotional regulation.
- Emotional well-being: Sleep aids emotional regulation, stress reduction and is closely linked to mental health.
- Ensuring that children get enough quality sleep is essential for their growth, learning and overall wellbeing.

The National Sleep Foundation recommends that children aged 5-12 get 9-11 hours of sleep a night.

Barriers to good sleep

There are many reasons that children don't get good quality sleep. Some of these are:

- Irregular sleep schedules, especially on weekends, can disrupt a child's sleep routine.
- Use of electronic devices late into the night can be a significant barrier to a good night's sleep.
- A noisy or brightly lit room can make it difficult for children to fall asleep and stay asleep.
- Consuming caffeinated or sugary foods and drinks, especially in the evening can impact on a child's ability to fall asleep.
- Children might underestimate the importance of sleep, leading to a reluctance to create good sleep habits.

As a rough guide, children need:

Aged 3yrs – 5yrs: 11 – 14 hours sleep

Aged 6 – 12yrs: 10 – 13 hours sleep