

Dear Families



At the time of writing this, we are just about to start moving things around to make the school ready for the first 'OtterFest'. It's not our first Christmas event, but it's been a while since the last one and we are really excited to bring some more Christmas joy to the school.

It's been a lovely week of festive entertainment, much of which you can read about within the newsletter. If you are joining us later, I hope you have a great evening, and please do let me know if you have any feedback.

This is most likely to be the final newsletter of the term, so I would like to take the opportunity to say Thank You to everyone who has been in to school to support our children or has attended one of our events or worships.

Even though there is still another school week to go, I send the very best wishes for a wonderful Christmas.

Mr Geraghty 

Out and About with our Community Council

This week, some of the older children in our Community Council, which is one of the eight councils in our Pupil Parliament, took part in a 'decoration swap' with younger children and older residents in the village.

Across the school, children made a variety of decorations, which the council took to Bright Horizons, James's Place Adult Daycare and BrendonCare Otterbourne Hill, to exchange for decorations made by other members of the community.

It was a valuable experience for our council members who said that they didn't know about the different places around them. We have created a display of some of the various decorations we came back to school with, in our school reception for you to enjoy. My thanks to Mrs Simpson for organising such a heart-warming experience for the children.



Farewell Mr Gasson

At the end of this term, Mr Gasson will head off to pastures new as he takes on a slightly different teaching role within one of the area's specialist provision schools. We wish him the very best for the next stage of his career.

Birthday Books

We hope that you have enjoyed seeing the return of 'Birthday Books' at the school. Thank you to those of you who have participated - if you haven't yet seen the information about this, please take a look at our website or more information: <https://www.otterbourneprimaryschool.com/birthday-books/>

'Play' in school

I want to make you aware that despite the constant message to children that play should be 'hands-free' in school, we still see a lot of overly energetic behaviours. This week, such 'play' has resulted in a child's coat being torn, which is clearly something that we don't want to see. We will continue to repeat the message and act accordingly where children are not listening and thank you in advance for your understanding and support.

THE FINAL WEEK OF TERM...

There is a lot still to come before the Christmas break, so I just wanted to shine a spotlight on the activities planned for the final week.

Please ensure you have ordered Christmas lunch for the 19th, if you aren't sending in a packed lunch on that day. Thank you.

Monday 16th - Christmas Disco - Year R/Key Stage 1 (4.45pm - 5.45pm), Key Stage 2 (6pm - 7pm) - it would be lovely to see children in Christmas outfits.

Thursday 19th (9:15am) - Our termly award ceremony at St. Matthew's Church. Parents of children receiving awards have been contacted about attending.

Thursday 19th - Christmas dinner day. Children are able to wear their Christmas jumpers on this day.

Thursday 19th - Pantomime in the village hall.

Friday 20th - Candlelit Carols at St. Matthew's Church (2:30pm) - During this festive event we will share carols by candlelight and messages of Christmas. Parents are welcome (with a battery powered candle if you wish!)

Friday 20th - End of Autumn Term with a couple of Christmas songs to end the term



Spanish4Kids

AND ADULTS!

Did you know Spanish is in the TOP 3 most spoken languages?

Spanish Lunchtime Club – Monday's – Spring Term 2025

We will be continuing to run our Spanish Lunchtime clubs at Otterbourne Primary School on Monday's from 12 noon – 12.30pm (KS2) and 12.30pm – 1pm (KS1)

If you are interested in signing up your child, please click on my booking link <https://spanish-4-kids.classforkids.io>, selecting the relevant school club to secure your child's place.

Alternatively, if you wish to book a TRIAL lesson to give your child a chance to try a Spanish club, please feel free to using the above link!

If you have any questions, please do feel free to get in touch with me direct.

Many thanks,
Pippa Chia

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ANXIETY TOOLKIT FOR PARENTS AND CARERS WEBINAR

SATURDAY 25TH JANUARY 2025, 10AM- 12 MIDDAY

LEARN PRACTICAL TIPS AND STRATEGIES TO HELP PARENTS AND CARERS SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN THROUGH ANXIETY IN THIS ONLINE EVENT !

Are you feeling overwhelmed by your child's anxiety? Join us for this online event where Your Space Therapies will provide you with practical tools and strategies to help you support your child. Emma Connor, Child Psychotherapist will share valuable, easy to implement strategies to navigate through challenging situations and promote your child's well-being. Don't miss out on this opportunity to learn and connect with other parents and carers facing similar experiences. Register now and equip yourself with the **tools** to better understand and manage anxiety in your child.

Price: £27.80

For more information and booking please scan the QR code:



Scan me!

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

SAFETY OVER THE FESTIVE SEASON

The holiday season, marked by Christmas and New Year, brings joy and togetherness but also presents unique safety challenges for children, families and educators. From busy holiday shopping, traveling and family gatherings to managing digital activity during school breaks, staying safe during this period requires heightened awareness. This guide offers practical tips to help families and educators maintain a more secure and fulfilling festive period.

1 MONITOR DIGITAL ACTIVITY



Children spend more time online during school holidays, increasing exposure to potential dangers such as cyberbullying, inappropriate content and online predators. Balancing screen time, avoiding harmful websites and ensuring children engage positively online can be difficult without proper monitoring tools. Set clear boundaries, encourage open discussions about online safety and use parental controls to manage content exposure and screen time effectively. Regular check-ins and positive reinforcement around digital habits encourage safe online behaviour.

2 PRACTICE FIRE SAFETY PROTOCOLS



The incidence of house fires increases during Christmas due to greater use of candles, cookers and electrical decorations. Open flames, electrical overloads and the need for quick response plans can make fire safety challenging. Ensure smoke detectors are operational, keep fire extinguishers on hand and teach children how to respond in case of a fire emergency. Avoid leaving cooking unattended and use fire-safe candles to prevent mishaps.

3 CREATE TRAVEL SAFETY PLANS

More families tend to travel during the holidays, resulting in busier roads, increased traffic accidents and weather-related hazards. Weather conditions, road rage, fatigue and busy airports can all compromise travel safety. Pack emergency kits and adhere to seatbelt laws. Plan routes in advance and allow extra travel time to avoid rushing and mitigate risks on busy roads.

4 BEWARE OF ALLERGIES



Holiday meals often involve many foods that may contain allergens. Cross contamination, unclear labelling and lack of allergy-friendly options can lead to severe reactions. Communicate any allergy needs to hosts, provide safe food alternatives and carry necessary medications like antihistamines or EpiPens. Teaching children how to advocate for themselves and recognise dangerous foods also contributes to safer celebrations.

5 PREVENT THE SPREAD OF ILLNESS



Cold weather and seasonal socialising can increase the spread of viruses like flu and COVID-19. Crowded gatherings, schools out of session and frequent travel can lead to higher infection risks. Emphasise hygiene, encourage vaccination, disinfect surfaces and isolate symptomatic individuals. Communication with children about proper hygiene practices is essential to reduce the spread of illness.

6 STAY VIGILANT ON THE ROAD



Increased holiday traffic heightens the risk of accidents for both drivers and pedestrians. Distracted driving, pedestrian safety and inclement weather can complicate road safety. Encourage pedestrian safety practices, avoid distracted driving and never drive under the influence.

7 MAINTAIN SAFE DECORATIONS



Festive decorations such as Christmas lights and candles can pose electrical, fire and choking hazards if mishandled. Frayed wires, toppling Christmas trees, small ornaments and open flames can be difficult to control, especially in busy households with children. Inspect and maintain decorations, secure Christmas trees, place fragile or small items out of reach and ensure candles are never left unattended. Testing smoke alarms and using flame-retardant decorations can significantly reduce risks.

8 SET BOUNDARIES FOR GIFTS



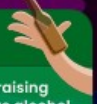
Some toys and gadgets can present choking, sharp-edge or safety risks, particularly for young children. Ensuring that gifts meet safety standards and are age appropriate can be complex with so many options available. Inspect all toys carefully and ensure any tech devices have parental controls. Setting expectations around safe gift use and discarding packaging that poses a risk also helps to prevent accidents.

9 ADDRESS STRESS & FATIGUE



Holiday pressures can lead to burnout, which affects both physical and mental health. Overpacked schedules and a lack of downtime can cause stress and fatigue, leading to accidents or poor decision making. Incorporate rest, maintain regular routines and seek support to reduce stress. Encourage activities that promote relaxation to create a healthier, happier holiday experience for everyone.

10 DRINK RESPONSIBLY



Alcohol is commonly present at holiday events, raising concerns about safety and supervision. Excessive alcohol consumption can lead to accidents, impaired judgment and lack of supervision for children. Designate responsible adults, limit consumption and provide transportation alternatives for guests. Teaching moderation and modelling responsible behaviour in front of children ensures that celebrations remain positive and secure.

Meet Our Expert

James Whelan is a chartered health and safety consultant with 10 years of experience in promoting family and community safety. Specialising in risk assessment and preventative strategies, he has worked with educational institutions, public health agencies and community groups to deliver safety education and training.



The National College

Source: See full reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/safety-over-the-festive-season>

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about WORRY AND ANXIETY

Worry and anxiety are common emotions experienced by children, often triggered by uncertainty or fear. While worry involves concern about future events, anxiety is a persistent feeling of dread or apprehension. Current statistics indicate a rising prevalence of anxiety disorders among children, and this guide has some expert advice on understanding and addressing these concerns.

UNDERSTANDING WORRY AND ANXIETY

Worry and anxiety are emotional responses to stress or uncertainty. Worry is typically associated with potential misfortune, while anxiety is characterised by feelings of fear, apprehension or unease. Both can manifest physically through symptoms such as restlessness, fatigue or muscle tension. Understanding the distinction between worry and anxiety is crucial for effectively addressing these concerns in children.



DIFFERENTIATING WORRY FROM ANXIETY

While worry and anxiety share similarities – in that they both involve concerns about possible trouble – anxiety tends to be more constant and overwhelming. Worry may come and go depending on circumstances, whereas anxiety can linger regardless of the situation. It's essential to recognise when the former crosses into the latter, as anxiety can significantly impact a child's daily functioning and wellbeing.



WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES

Untreated worry and anxiety in childhood can have potentially lifelong impacts on a person's mental health and wellbeing. Chronic anxiety may increase the risk of developing anxiety disorders, depression or other mental health conditions later in life. Additionally, unresolved worry and anxiety can negatively impact self-esteem, confidence and overall resilience. It's essential to address these concerns proactively and provide appropriate support and intervention.



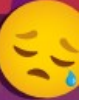
THE IMPACT ON CHILDREN

Excessive worry and anxiety can have profound effects on children's mental and emotional health. It may interfere with their ability to concentrate, sleep or participate in daily activities. Chronic worry and anxiety can also lead to physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches or difficulty breathing. Left unchecked, these concerns can escalate and potentially contribute to the development of anxiety disorders later in life.



THE EMOTIONAL TOLL

The emotional impact of worry and anxiety on children can be significant, affecting their overall quality of life and wellbeing. Children experiencing chronic worry or anxiety may feel overwhelmed, irritable or helpless. They may also withdraw from social activities or avoid situations that trigger their anxiety, leading to feelings of isolation or loneliness. Addressing these concerns early can help prevent long-term emotional distress and promote healthy coping strategies.



ACADEMIC & SOCIAL IMPACTS

Impacts on the academic performance and social interactions of children and young people are very possible. Frequent worry or anxiety may impair concentration, memory and problem-solving skills, making it difficult for children to succeed in education. Anxiety can also hinder social development by causing children and young people to avoid social situations or to struggle with communication and interpersonal relationships, potentially leading to feelings of isolation or exclusion.



Advice for Parents & Educators

ENCOURAGE OPEN COMMUNICATION

Parents and educators can foster a supportive environment by encouraging children to express their worries and anxieties openly. Actively listening and acknowledging young people's emotions can help them feel understood and supported, reducing the situation's intensity. Creating opportunities for regular check-ins and discussions about one's feelings can promote healthy coping strategies and strengthen communication bonds.



CREATE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Parents and educators play a crucial role in creating a supportive environment that promotes emotional wellbeing. Establishing routines, providing predictability and offering reassurance can help relieve anxiety and create a sense of security for children. Foster a culture of empathy and understanding, where children feel safe enough to express their emotions and seek support when needed.



TEACH COPING STRATEGIES

Empowering children with effective coping strategies is essential for managing worry and anxiety. Encourage the use of relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, mindfulness or progressive muscle relaxation to calm anxious thoughts and promote a sense of composure. Additionally, teaching positive self-talk and problem-solving skills can help children develop resilience and confidence in managing challenging situations.



SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

Recognising when to seek professional help is vital for addressing significant or persistent worry and anxiety in children. If worry or anxiety significantly impacts a child's daily functioning, interferes with their relationships or academic performance, or causes significant distress, it may be necessary to consult with a mental health practitioner. Early intervention can prevent long-term consequences and promote positive outcomes for children's psychological wellbeing.



Meet Our Expert

Adam Gillett is Associate Vice Principal for Personal Development at Penistone Grammar School and works on secondment one day a week for Minds Ahead, which collaborates with schools on improving their mental health provisions.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College