

Rothbury First School Safeguarding Newsletter February 2024



Information taken from



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN ABOUT A CHILD

If you are worried about a child's safety please do not hesitate to contact the Designated Safeguarding Leads straight away.

The following members of staff are Designated Safeguarding Leads at Rothbury First School
Mrs C Auld
Mrs H Duffield

Our safeguarding governor is Diane Pringle

They can be contacted on 01669 620283 or via email

For further information on safeguarding at our school, please look on the safeguarding page on the school website.

[RFS Safeguarding](#)

Children's emotional well-being is just as important as their physical health. Good mental health helps them develop the resilience to cope with whatever life throws at them and grow into well-rounded, healthy adults.

Things that can help keep children and young people mentally well include:

- being in good physical health, eating a balanced diet and getting regular exercise
- having time and freedom to play, indoors and outdoors
- being part of a family that gets along well most of the time
- going to a school that looks after the wellbeing of all its pupils
- taking part in local activities

Other factors are also important, including feeling loved, trusted, understood and safe. Children who are optimistic, and resilient, have some control over their lives and feel like they belong are more likely to have good mental well-being.

What can affect children and young people's mental health?

Traumatic events can trigger mental health problems for children and young people who are already vulnerable.

Changes such as moving home, changing school or the birth of a new sibling, etc may act as triggers. Some children who start school feel excited about making new friends and doing new activities, but some may also feel anxious.

Are some children and young people more likely to experience mental health problems?

Certain risk factors can make some children and young people more likely to experience mental health problems than others. However, experiencing them doesn't mean a child will definitely – or even probably – go on to have mental health problems.

These factors include:

- having a long-term physical illness
- a parent who has had mental health problems, problems with alcohol or has been in trouble with the law
- the death of someone close to them
- parents who separate or divorce
- experiencing severe bullying or physical or sexual abuse
- poverty or homelessness
- experiencing discrimination
- caring for a relative, taking on adult responsibilities
- having long-lasting difficulties at school

What mental health problems commonly occur in children?

- Depression affects more children and young people today than in the last few decades. Teenagers are more likely to experience depression than young children.
- Self-harm is a very common problem among young people. Some people who experience intense emotional pain may try to deal with it by hurting themselves.
- Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) can cause young people to become extremely worried. Very young children or children starting or moving school may have separation anxiety.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can follow physical or sexual abuse, witnessing something extremely frightening or traumatising, being the victim of violence or severe bullying or surviving a disaster.
- Children who are consistently overactive, impulsive and have difficulty paying attention may have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- Eating disorders usually start in the teenage years and are more common in girls than boys. The number of young people who develop an eating disorder is small. Still, eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa can have serious consequences on their physical health and development.

Ways to support a child or young person



Be there to listen

Regularly ask your child how they're doing, to help them get used to talking about their feelings, and know there's always someone there to listen. You can get tips on [Young Minds: How to talk to your child about mental health](#).



Support them through difficulties

Pay attention to how your child is feeling or behaving and try to help them work through difficulties. It may not be easy facing challenging behaviour, but try to help them understand what they're feeling and why. Learn more from [the Maudsley Charity on difficult behaviour](#).



Stay involved in their life

Show interest in their life and what's important to them. It not only helps them value who they are but also makes it easier for you to spot problems and support them.



Encourage their interests

Support and encourage your child to explore their interests. Being active or creative, learning new things and being a part of a team helps connect us and boost our mental wellbeing.



Take what they say seriously

Listening to and valuing what they say makes them feel valued. Consider how to help them work through their emotions in constructive ways. [Anna Freud Centre's guide on ways to support children and young people](#) has more on this.



Build positive routines

Try to have structure around regular routines, especially around healthy eating and exercise. A good night's sleep is also important, so have a fixed time for going to bed and getting up. The [Sleep Charity has relaxation sleep tips for children](#).

Signs a child might be struggling

A large number of children and young people will experience behavioural or emotional problems at some stage. For some, these will resolve with time, while others will need professional support.

It might be difficult to know if there is something upsetting your child, but there are ways to spot when something's wrong. Look out for:

- significant changes in behaviour
- ongoing difficulty sleeping
- withdrawing from social situations
- not wanting to do things they usually like
- self-harm or neglecting themselves



When to get professional help for a child or young person

You know your child better than anyone, so if you're worried, first think if there has been a significant change in their behaviour.

If there has, is it caused by any specific events or changes in their life? Does it only happen at home, school or college, or when they're with others or alone?

Where can you go for help and support?

If you're concerned about a child or young person's mental health, you can get free, confidential advice via phone, email or webchat from the **Young Minds Parents Helpline**.

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-helpline/>

Action for Children has lots of tips to help you spot signs of mental health issues in children and advice on the action you can take to help.

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/our-work-and-impact/children-and-families/good-mental-health/>

Experiencing the loss of a friend or loved one can be extremely difficult. The **Childhood Bereavement Network** has information and links to national and local organisations you or the child you look after might find helpful.

<https://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>

ONLINE CHALLENGES, SCARES AND HOAXES

Online challenges, viral stories, hoaxes, or digital ghost stories can commonly appear online through social media or other online platforms. The 'challenges' themselves can vary but often encourage individuals to harm themselves, others, or property in the real world. They are often created to cause alarm and have been designed to seem enticing or exciting for young people.

What are the most popular online challenges to look out for?

Naming online challenges is unnecessary – you don't need to look out for them. Any challenge that encourages a physical or mental danger to individuals will need to be de-escalated. However, don't go out of your way to search for potentially harmful material online – this is creating awareness around something you are trying to shield yourself from.

What is the purpose of an online challenge?

Online challenges are primarily there to gain a response. This can either be to cause alarm, to promote unhealthy behaviour, or to encourage offline harm towards individuals and others. Many 'well-known' online challenges were found not to exist and were merely created to cause unnecessary panic.

Are all online challenges bad?

Some online challenges can help promote respect and kindness towards others. There have been awareness challenges around health conditions in the past which has helped bring considerable amounts of money to charity. Not all challenges are bad but it is down to the individual to determine whether a challenge is bringing harm to themselves or others.

How can I make sure my child doesn't participate in a harmful online challenge?

Children are unlikely to cause harm to themselves or others just because someone online told them to. Young people have critical thinking skills to determine what is the right and wrong behaviour. Spend time with them discussing their online lives so they are confident in how they respond to harmful online content.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO AS A PARENT OR CARER?

■ Don't panic

Online challenges are deemed successful when they cause panic. Don't get caught up in the panic and take a step back before acting any further. A calm and collected manner can help prevent the spread of unnecessary worry and panic.

▲ Don't name it

Warning others about an online challenge may seem like the smart thing to do but naming it can inadvertently direct other people towards it. Sending warnings can draw unwanted attention towards the challenge and the potential harm it can bring. Minimise the exposure and don't give your child something to look for!

● Report it

Stop the spread of harm by reporting it online. Social media sites and other platforms should direct users to report content that is harmful. If you want further advice around content that is legal but harmful, visit [Report Harmful Content](#). You should also alert relevant authorities if you are concerned about real-world offline harm that a challenge is potentially causing.

◆ Have open conversations

Children and young people can encounter online challenges that may cause upset, they may also see challenges that may initially seem 'fun' but could actually cause real offline harm. Ensure that you or someone your child can trust is available to talk. Try to de-escalate the problem without causing more worry and know where to go for further support such as correct reporting channels, or emotional support services such as The Mix. Discussing our online lives can allow family members to feel confident to come forward for support. This can also help in preventing online challenges from growing.