

THE SLEEP FACTOR: TEACHER GUIDANCE

This guidance accompanies three lessons exploring the importance of healthy sleep. The lessons aim to raise awareness of the impact of quality sleep, and to equip young people with the skills and strategies they need to get better sleep.

One lesson has been designed for key stage 2, looking at changes to sleep patterns during puberty; one for key stage 3, encouraging healthy sleep habits; and one for key stage 4 — which addresses the impact of the shift in adolescent sleep patterns.

We are grateful to the Department of Children's Sleep Medicine at Evelina London Children's Hospital for their advice and support in creating these resources.

*Please read and consider this guidance first, before delivering the lessons.

PREPARING TO TEACH

These lessons should be taught within the context of a planned series of lessons looking at issues around healthy balanced lifestyles. For key stage 2, this lesson may be most appropriate when introducing the physical and emotional changes that take place during puberty. For key stage 3, the lesson is aimed at supporting pupils with transition, so would be most effective with Year 7 pupils who have recently started secondary school. For key stage 4, the lesson may be sited within lessons on effective study habits or during a unit of work on maintaining a healthy, balanced lifestyle. Throughout the lessons, we have focused on habits and routines that promote healthy sleep which young people are able to take responsibility for in their own lives. The new statutory expectations regarding health education require schools to address healthy lifestyle factors including sleep. These lessons can support schools in meeting those requirements through their PSHE curriculum.

Links to PSHE Association Programme of Study

Each of the three core themes of the [PSHE programme of study](#) contains suggested learning opportunities which provide the context through which learners can develop knowledge, essential skills and attributes. The table below shows the learning opportunities from the relevant PSHE education core themes at KS2, KS3 and KS4 which are met by these lessons. Learning should always take place within a spiral programme of knowledge, skills and attribute development, where prior learning is revisited, reinforced and extended in age and stage-appropriate contexts.

	LEARNING OPPORTUNITY FROM PROGRAMME OF STUDY	LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES
KEY STAGE 2	H1. what positively and negatively affects their physical, mental and emotional health H18: how their body will, and their emotions may, change as they approach and move through puberty H24: the responsible use of mobile phones: safe keeping (looking after it) and safe user habits (time limits, use of passcode, turning it off at night etc.)	To learn about the importance of good sleep Pupils will be able to... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain why sleep is important for a healthy lifestyle • describe bedtime routines that help improve sleep • identify how sleep patterns and needs might change during puberty
KEY STAGE 3	H13. the benefits of physical activity and exercise and the importance of sleep H15. the importance of, and strategies for, maintaining a balance between work, leisure and exercise	To learn about healthy sleep habits Pupils will be able to... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the impacts of sleep on health and wellbeing • describe healthy sleep patterns and identify factors which can reduce sleep quality • describe a range of strategies for ensuring appropriate sleep patterns
KEY STAGE 4	H7. how to take increased responsibility for maintaining and monitoring their own health	To learn about the importance of sleep and strategies to maintain good sleep habits Pupils will be able to... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the importance of sleep for wellbeing and brain function, particularly during adolescence • explain how lifestyle choices can affect sleep quality • describe a range of strategies for ensuring appropriate sleep patterns and suggest advice for those struggling to sleep

Creating a safe learning environment

A safe learning environment helps pupils feel comfortable with sharing their ideas, values and attitudes without attracting negative feedback, and will help teachers to manage discussions on sensitive issues confidently. As with many topics in PSHE education, the topic of sleep may seem straightforward; but there can still be sensitivities involved for some pupils, as there may be elements at home beyond their control (e.g. overcrowding, loud environment etc.). These lessons therefore focus on habits and routines which will empower young people to make realistic and positive changes to their sleep.

It is good practice for teachers to:

- work with pupils to establish ground rules about how they will behave in PSHE lessons, such as:
 - Everyone has the right to be heard and respected.
 - We will use language that won't offend or upset other people.
 - We will use the correct terms, and if we don't know them we'll ask the teacher.
 - We will comment on what was said, not the person who said it.
 - We won't share our own or our friends' personal experiences.
 - We won't put anyone on the spot and we have a right to pass.
 - We won't judge or make assumptions about anyone.
- offer opportunities for pupils to discuss issues in small groups as well as sharing views with the class
- make boxes available in which pupils can place anonymous questions or concerns, to avoid having to voice them in front of the class
- provide balanced information and differing views to help pupils clarify their own opinions
- be sensitive to the needs and experiences of individuals — some pupils may have direct experience of some of the issues covered
- distance the learning from pupils to discourage personal disclosures in the classroom and to keep the learning environment safe
- always work within the school's policies on safeguarding and confidentiality
- link PSHE education into the whole school approach to supporting pupil welfare
- make pupils aware of sources of support, both inside and outside the school

**Further guidance on creating a safe learning environment is available from the PSHE Association.*

DEVELOPING SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE

Changes in sleep patterns

SLEEP IN 6-12 YEAR OLDS	
ISSUE	EXPLANATION
Sleep requirements	Children of this age require about 10-11 hours of sleep per night on average, although many are averaging between 9-10 hours, due to increasing school obligations and extracurricular activities, as well as increased screen time in the evenings. Some pupils might have less need for sleep and be able to get away with less without it impacting on their sleep, whilst others may need more — sleep needs vary between individuals, just like height, so we can't expect to have the same needs as other individuals.
Common sleep problems	Children can experience a range of sleep problems at this age, such as difficulty falling and staying asleep, sleepwalking, sleep terrors, teeth grinding, nightmares or snoring.
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children of this age need a regular sleep schedule, waking up and going to sleep at the same time every day (including at the weekends). Bedtime for this age group should be before 9pm.• Routines before bed should include calming activities such as reading and one-to-one time with a parent. The hour before bedtime should avoid screen use (e.g. TV, phones, tablets etc.) or overly energetic activities.• Children should avoid caffeinated or high-sugar products such as fizzy drinks, tea or coffee and sweets, particularly during the afternoon and evening.

SLEEP IN 13-18 YEAR OLDS	
ISSUE	EXPLANATION
SLEEP REQUIREMENTS	Teenagers need approximately 9 hours of sleep per night, although many are averaging approximately 7 hours, meaning they are significantly sleep deprived. After puberty, the internal clock of an adolescent undergoes a biological shift of up to 2 hours later, meaning that a 14-year-old who used to fall asleep at 9pm could now find it difficult to fall asleep before 11pm. The time that teenagers naturally wake up also shifts by up to 2 hours later. This is why teenagers often find it difficult to wake up early and can become frustrated if advised to go to bed early.
COMMON SLEEP PROBLEMS	<p>Many teenagers try to compensate for sleep loss by sleeping in at weekends. However, this can continue to disrupt sleep patterns and make it harder to get back into a routine on Sunday night / Monday morning.</p> <p>Teenagers can suffer particularly from moodiness or irritability when sleep deprived, as well as experiencing delayed cognitive ability. Teenagers are also likely to be more impulsive, and engage in risk-taking behaviours if they are sleep-deprived.</p>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teenagers will also benefit from a regular sleep schedule, waking up and going to sleep at the same time every day, avoiding lying in at the weekends. Teenagers should go to sleep in time to get 9 hours sleep before the required wake up time. Some people find afternoon naps helpful but they should be 15-30 minutes maximum and in the early afternoon. Naps should only be used as a technique if absolutely necessary; it is much better to try to improve the quality and length of night-time sleep. • The time before bed (at least 60 minutes) should allow for winding down and must avoid screen use (e.g. TV, phones, tablets etc.). It is recommended that a phone is not kept in the bedroom (or used as an alarm), as it can be very hard to self-monitor their use. • Teenagers should avoid caffeinated or high-sugar products such as fizzy drinks, tea or coffee and sweets — particularly during the afternoon and evening. It is also important to avoid reliance on caffeine tablets when revising or tired as a result of sleep deprivation, as these can interfere with natural sleep cycles. • Alcohol, smoking and drugs can have serious consequences on sleep (and other health issues). Sleeping pills should also be avoided as these can develop a dependency and lead to sleep problems returning when the use of the pills ceases. • Spending time outdoors every day (especially in the morning) can be beneficial to sleep as sunlight can help keep the internal body clock in check. Equally, regular exercise can help falling asleep and sleeping deeply, although it is not ideal to exercise too close to bedtime.

SIGNPOSTING SUPPORT

It is important to ensure that pupils know where they can seek help and further advice both now and in the future if they are concerned about their sleep. Teachers should remind pupils that they can always share concerns with their parents or with trusted adults at school such as their tutor, head of year, or a school nurse / counsellor.

If pupils have serious concerns about their sleep, they should also be advised to consult their GP.

Pupils can also seek support from the following websites:

Childline: www.childline.org.uk / 0800 1111 — for general advice about concerns

NHS Choices: www.nhs.co.uk — for health advice and help finding local services

Specific NHS advice on sleep is available here: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/>

Sleep Council: www.sleepcouncil.org.uk — for sleep tips and links to other organisations