

SEND Newsletter

Summer Term 1 (2023)



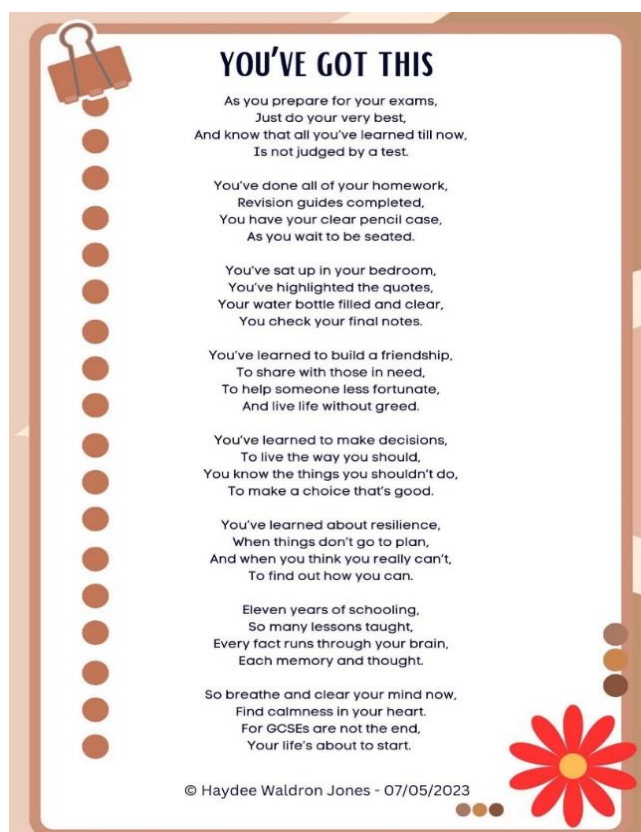
RIDGEWOOD
HIGH SCHOOL

Welcome

Welcome to the **fifth** Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) newsletter.

As the end of this academic year fast approaches, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our year 11 students on the way they have conducted themselves during the examinations they have sat so far. In what has no doubt been a challenging time, pupils have still maintained their smiles and been keen to share how hard they have been working both within and outside of the exam room. As the final exams pass, we look forward to celebrating their Ridgewood journey at both the Leavers Assembly and Prom.

I came across the poem below, and thought it was apt:



Year 11, we want to wish you all the best for your next adventure beyond Ridgewood. It has been a pleasure getting to know you, watching you flourish and supporting you over the past five years.

Please do let us know how you are getting on and be sure to say hi when you see us.

In this month's newsletter, I want to focus on a crucial aspect of your child's well-being: **mental health**.

The importance of mental health in children with SEND cannot be overstated. A healthy mental state is vital for their overall well-being, learning, and development. Children with SEND may experience additional stress and anxiety due to the specific challenges they face. This could stem from academic pressures, social interactions, or their ability to manage daily activities. Ensuring that they receive the necessary support to cope with these challenges is essential.

Maintaining good mental health in children with SEND enables them to thrive in their learning environment, develop resilience, and form meaningful relationships with their peers. Furthermore, a positive mental state can improve their self-esteem, self-confidence, and ability to navigate life's challenges.

Throughout this newsletter, I hope to share some practical tips and advice which could help you support your child's mental health.

SEND Provision: Parent Survey

We continuously strive to improve our practice and value parental input to ensure that all learners experience success. As you will be aware from email correspondence, we would love to hear your opinions on how children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities are supported in school. This short survey will take no longer than 5 minutes to complete and we will use your responses to help us reflect on current practice and plan future provision in school. You can access the survey here:

<https://forms.office.com/e/NVZVS0si4x>

We would appreciate responses to be submitted by Friday 23rd June 2023. Thank you in anticipation of your support.

Dates for your diary:

- w/c 05.06.23 – Parent Voice on SEND Provision opens (via Microsoft Forms)
- 11.07.23 – Year 9 & 10 Rewards Trip
- 12.07.23 – Year 7 & 8 Rewards Trip
- 14.07.23 – SEN Coffee and Cake Event – 9.30am
- 21.07.23 – Last day of term for students
- 04.09.23 – INSET day (school closed to pupils)
- 05.09.23 – INSET day (school closed to pupils)
- 06.09.23 – Term starts for students

Whilst it is increasingly common for teenagers not to want to share everything with their parents, it is essential that children know you are there to listen, should they want to talk.



15 to 21 May 2023

Mental Health Awareness Week



#ToHelpMyAnxiety

Mental Health Awareness Week

The week prior to half term was Mental Health Awareness week. During tutor time, pupils explored the theme of the week: Anxiety, and explored strategies to help cope with this.

We informed pupils that anxiety is a normal emotion in us all, but sometimes it can get out of control and become a mental health problem and that of things can lead to feelings of anxiety, including exam pressures, relationships, starting a new job (or losing one) or other big life events.

Some of the strategies shared to cope with feelings of anxiety were as follows:

- Get moving
- Keep a diary
- Challenge your thoughts
- Spend time in nature
- Connect with people and talk about how you feel
- Try to get quality sleep/rest
- Try to eat a healthy, well balanced diet.

We advised pupils of the following external support agencies:



Source of information, support and guidance for various mental health related concerns.



Provides holistic mental health and well-being support to all young people in Dudley Borough between 9 to 25 years old.



24/7 365 days a year support and a listening ear if you are struggling to cope with life events or mental health concerns.

Listening Moments

Walk & Talk

Walking side by side allows the conversation to flow and silences feel less awkward

Chat Habit

Get in the habit of having a little chat at the same time each day, just before bed works well



In the Car

In the car, our children know they have us to themselves and side by side feels less scary



Busy Alongside

If your child is busy with e.g. homework be busy but interruptible (e.g. cleaning) nearby



Agree a Signal

Can you agree a signal that your child wants a chat e.g. an emoji they could text you?



Listening to Understand



Focus

Close all open brain tabs. Visibly remove distractions. Phone away. Computer off

Be Curious

Step into their world and ask open questions, avoid sounding judgemental



Validate

Identify and acknowledge their feelings and experiences. Offer frequent reassurance

Reflect

Use your own words to show you're listening and to check understanding



Silence

Embrace silences. Wait for them to fill the gaps even if it feels awkward



Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a powerful tool that can help children with SEND develop greater self-awareness, emotional regulation, and stress management.

The Benefits of Mindfulness for Children with SEND

Mindfulness can offer various benefits for children with SEND, including:

1. **Improved Focus and Concentration:** Mindfulness practices encourage children to pay attention to the present moment, which can help enhance their focus and concentration in daily activities.
2. **Emotional Regulation:** Through mindfulness, children can become more aware of their emotions, allowing them to manage and express their feelings more effectively.
3. **Reduced Anxiety and Stress:** Regular mindfulness practice can help children manage stress and anxiety by promoting relaxation and self-awareness.
4. **Enhanced Self-esteem:** Developing a greater understanding of their thoughts and feelings can help children with SEND build self-confidence and resilience.

Practising mindfulness and relaxation techniques with your child can be a valuable tool in reducing stress and anxiety. Here are some age-appropriate exercises that parents and carers can practice with their children to promote mental well-being and emotional regulation.

1. **Deep Breathing** Teach your child to take slow, deep breaths when they feel overwhelmed or anxious. Encourage them to breathe in through their nose for a count of four, hold the breath for a count of four, and then exhale through their mouth for a count of four. Repeat this process several times to help calm their nervous system.
2. **Progressive Muscle Relaxation** Guide your child through tensing and relaxing different muscle groups in their body. Start at their feet and work upwards, focusing on one muscle group at a time. This exercise can help release physical tension and promote relaxation.
3. **Guided Imagery** Invite your child to close their eyes and imagine a peaceful, calming scene. Encourage them to use all their senses to visualise the setting in detail. This technique can help them to shift focus away from stress and anxiety, creating a sense of inner peace.
4. **Mindful Colouring** Provide your child with colouring books or pages with intricate patterns, such as mandalas or nature scenes. Encourage them to focus on the colours and patterns as they colour, helping them to stay present in the moment and reduce anxious thoughts.
5. **The Five Senses** Exercise Ask your child to focus on each of their five senses one at a time. They can start by listing five things they see, then four things they feel, three things they hear, two things they smell, and one thing they taste. This activity helps to ground them in the present moment and take their mind off their worries.
6. **Mindful Listening** Play calming nature sounds or soothing music and ask your child to focus on the different sounds they can hear. This practice encourages them to stay present and develop their listening skills while promoting relaxation.

Remember, it may take some time for your child to become comfortable with these techniques, so be patient and supportive. Practising mindfulness and relaxation exercises together can not only help your child manage stress and anxiety but also strengthen your bond with them.

The following strategies may also be useful:

Working the Energy Off

Sometimes there's just so much angry or anxious energy running round inside us that we need to find some way to get it OUT. Here are some ideas to help:

- 1 Jump in muddy puddles 
- 2 Squidge slime or playdough 
- 3 Go somewhere quiet and scream 
- 4 Make a ball out of play dough and smash it 
- 5 Punch a punching bag or pillow 

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Sitting with the Feelings

Sometimes the most helpful thing is to sit with the feeling and allow ourselves to really feel and process it. Here are some ideas to help:

- 1 Cry 
- 2 Make and hide out in a blanket fort 
- 3 Sit in a window and watch the clouds pass 
- 4 Go to a calm quiet outdoor space and sit with the feelings 
- 5 Listen to sad or angry music 

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Making Anger Feel Heard

Anger needs to feel heard. Sometimes this means someone else hearing what it has to say, sometimes it's about learning to hear our own anger. Here are some ideas to help:

- 1 Talk about it with someone you trust 
- 2 Journal using 'what's weighing me down?' as a prompt 
- 3 Write a letter to your anger source (but don't send it!) 
- 4 Talk to a soft toy, pet or plant who will listen but won't answer back 
- 5 Call, text or online message a helpline such as ChildLine 

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Create and Destroy

Being allowed to make and then destroy something that represents our anger can feel good. Here are some ideas to try:

- 1 Write it down then scribble it out until the paper is worn through 
- 2 Cut up an old piece of material into tiny pieces then throw them away 
- 3 Draw your worries on cardboard then tear it up 
- 4 Scribble roughly on paper with crayons 
- 5 Scrunch and throw leaves. Imagine each one is a worry 

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