PARENT NEWSLETTER: Support for children and families over the festive season

12th December 2025

Whilst for most young people, the festive season brings weeks of fun and enjoyment, we are aware that some young people will struggle without the support from adults in school and will miss the routines and security the school provides.

To support our students and their families, we are providing a range of places for your child or yourself to access support over the break should they need it. We hope this is of use to you.

Young people - support for mental health

If you have urgent concerns about your child's mental health, please speak to your GP.

- Children and Adolescent Mental Health Team (CAMHS) have a website which has an extensive array of support for any child (or parent/carer of child) who may be struggling with any aspect of their Mental Health and Wellbeing - CAMHS If your child is in a mental health emergency situation the CAMHS crisis number is: **0800 9539599**
- Anna Freud has useful information for parents about how to support their Child's mental health and well being: Anna Freud

There are many organisations that can provide support to young people seeking advice, help and reassurance. These include Off the Record (OTR), Kooth, Young Minds and Childline:

- **Off The Record:** Free, self-referral counseling service for young people age 11-15, who are experiencing low mood, depression, anxiety, phobias, self-harm, eating problems and/or anger. Young people can call, email or text, and services operate in Patchway, Kingswood and Yate. Also offer parent support groups and sessions. Can also see Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for more information and up to date groups and activities.
  Tel: 0808 808 9120. Text: 07896 880011. Website: www.otrbristol.org.uk. Email: hello@otrbristol.org.uk
- **Kooth:** Free, safe and anonymous online support for young people 11-18. Monday – Friday 12pm – 10pm, Saturday – Sunday 6pm – 10pm. On Kooth you can: Chat to our friendly

counsellors; Read articles written by young people; Get support from the Kooth community; Write in a daily journal. https://kooth.com/

- **Young Minds** national charity offers confidential online and telephone information and support for anyone worried about the emotional, behaviour, or mental health of a child/young person up to 25 years of age, including ADHD, Autism and Aspergers. **Parents Helpline:** 0808 802 5544 Website: www.youngminds.org.uk
- **Young Minds Crisis Messenger Service** for free 24/7 support across the UK if you are experiencing a mental health crisis. Text YM to 85258.
- 11 to 19 year olds can get support from Sirona care & health's school nurses during the school holidays through the ChatHealth text messaging service. By texting 0731 263093, children and young people can ask for confidential advice on a range of issues including emotional health and wellbeing, relationships, smoking, stress and anxiety, self-esteem, bullying and drugs and alcohol. The service is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, excluding bank holidays. Find out more here ChatHealth – Children and Young People's Services (sirona-cic.org.uk)

Technology advice and Support

Here we have pulled together some useful links which may be helpful to ensure your child is safe online:

Parental Guides

Christmas can be an exciting time when many children are given new devices and gadgets. Ireland's online safety charity, CyberSafeKids, have put together a brand new guide for parents and carers covering:

- The benefits and risks of popular smart devices and toys.
- What you can do to make them safer.
- Age recommendations
- And more.

You can download the guide HERE.

New Android parental controls

From the beginning of December 2025 Google is releasing new and updated parental controls for Android devices. These include:

- Set the amount of screen time that can be spent on a device each day to help establish healthy habits.

- Set downtime schedules to automatically lock the device at night to ensure restful sleep without distraction.
- Control app usage by limiting time spent on specific apps, or blocking apps entirely.
- Add more time by granting extra minutes when a time limit is reached, or to extend a scheduled break.

You can find further details about these updates on the Google blog HERE and Internet Matters have a handy Android guide for parents which you can find HERE.

For Parents - Cyberbullying Advice

Children being bullied online, particularly in games and via messaging apps, remains one of the top concerns of many parents and their children. Internet Matters have a range of guides and articles to support parents and carers which I have listed below:

- Talking to children and conversation tips for ages 6-10, 11-13, 14-17 and vulnerable children - HERE
- What is cyberbullying and what are the signs - HERE
- Helpful ways to prevent cyberbullying - HERE
- How to deal with cyberbullying - HERE
- Parents experiences of cyberbullying - HERE
- Useful resource - HERE

Support for families

Support for young people eligible for benefits-related free school meals

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is running again during the winter holidays for children and young people in South Glos.

Dates are generally between Monday 22 December 2025 and Friday 2 January 2026 but will vary by provider. Each child can receive up to 4 days support over the winter holidays.

The HAF programme is for children and young people aged 5 to 16 who receive benefits-related free school meals. Before booking funded HAF places, you need to have successfully applied for free school meals at www.southglos.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals

Please follow these steps:

Visit www.southglos.gov.uk/HAF for full information on the HAF programme and further support available to families. Click on 'book a space for your child now' – this will take you directly to our booking platform with full listings of all the available activities and clubs. You will need to register your child on this system unless they have previously attended a HAF programme– in which case you will already have an account, so you will simply need to book the dates. The system will run an eligibility check to ensure that your child is registered on our benefits-related free school meals list. The list is kept up to date on a weekly basis, so it's best to build in time to apply for benefits-related free school meals ahead of booking HAF places. The booking system is mobile friendly so should be accessible to most families. If you do not have online access, you will need to contact the HAF club provider directly to book places for you.

Support from South Gloucestershire Council

Click here for support available from South Gloucestershire around financial support for residents, getting enough to eat and mental health support

Support for Parental conflict / separated parents

This page contains free resources for parents and expectant parents in South Gloucestershire, and for professionals who are supporting parents to reduce conflict.

South Glos LIFE | Relationships matter

The Parents Plus Parenting when Separated programme

Help to resolve parental conflict

Free online courses for parents and carers

Tavistock relationships:Between us app

Is it parental conflict or domestic abuse?

Useful resources

Grief/Loss

As we come to the end of 2025 it is often the unspoken side of holidays that needs to be discussed.

Please see the links below if your child needs any support with grief and loss

Grief/Loss

https://www.talkgrief.org/