

SEN Newsletter

Welcome back, everyone, to our newsletter. And another 5 weeks gone in a blink of an eye. It's been a short one, but it's been full of learning and beautiful moments.

We know that now, with the warmer days, lots of parents get brave and decide to go ahead and support their children to get rid of the nappy, so we would like to give some ideas and guidance on what and how to do it. Following our previous newsletter where we talked about helping our children to regulate their emotions, we would like to share with you a lovely document called "The regulation ladder" which helps explain how a child can move from calm and settled to overwhelmed. As well as some dates.

Potty training

We know that potty training can feel like a big challenge — for us as parents and, of course, for our children. Many families choose to begin when the warmer weather arrives: fewer layers to remove, less laundry when accidents happen, and it's more comfortable for little ones if they're spending time without clothes.

To create a simple and helpful guide for you, we've gathered information from a range of trusted sources. This is a general overview, and you know your child better than anyone. If you have any questions or would like to chat about how to get started, just come and knock on the door.

Potty Training Starts Earlier Than Most People Think

Children learn best through repetition and gentle exposure — just like learning to walk, talk, or use a spoon. Potty training works the same way.

You don't need to wait for 'readiness signs'. Many children — especially those with additional needs — never show them. Instead, start building skills early so the transition away from nappies is smooth and stress-free.

- Most children can begin potty learning from 6-9 months (when they can sit up).
- Research shows it's healthiest to stop using nappies between 18-30 months.
- Early learning prevents resistance later and supports bladder and bowel health.

STEP 1: PREPARATION

Build body awareness and confidence while your child is still wearing nappies.

- Change nappies promptly — teaches that being clean and dry is normal.
- Change standing up once they can stand, involving them in flushing and handwashing.
- Talk about wee and poo in a calm, matter-of-fact way.
- Offer plenty of water-based drinks to support bladder and bowel health.
- Ensure soft, daily poos — constipation must be treated before training.
- Give short nappy-free time (up to 30 minutes after a wee/poo).
- Add a cloth inside disposable nappies so they can feel when they've weed.

STEP 2: PRACTICE

What practice includes:

- Introduce the potty or toilet using books, toys and play.
- Regular short potty sits — after waking, after meals, or when you notice signs.
- Teach simple communication (words, signs, pictures).
- Practise pushing trousers down and up.
- Teach wiping, flushing, handwashing and drying.
- Use play — dolls, stories, stickers, special potty-time toys.
- Keep language positive — avoid calling poo “smelly” or “stinky.”

STEP 3: STOPPING NAPPIES

How to make the transition successful:

- Explain the change clearly — say goodbye to nappies together.
- Dress in easy-to-pull-down clothes (joggers, leggings).
- Keep drinks to 6-8 cups a day to support healthy toileting.
- Watch for signs: fidgeting, going quiet, hiding, straining.
- Guide them to the potty without over-prompting.
- Praise every attempt, not just success.
- Stay consistent — no nappies for outings.
- Boys should sit down for wees at first.

NAP TIMES & NIGHT-TIME DRYNESS

Night dryness usually comes later — often after age 3-5.

Nap time tips:

- Potty before naps.
- Stop nappies at nap time once they often wake dry.
- Expect accidents — use waterproof covers.
- Help them use the potty immediately after waking.

Night-time tips:

- Potty at bedtime.
- Stop drinks one hour before sleep.
- Calm bedtime routine — no screens.
- Avoid “lifting” (waking to wee) — it encourages weeing in sleep.
- If still wetting at age 5, speak to a health professional.

OUT AND ABOUT

- Bring a potty and full spare outfit.
- Keep early trips short.
- Avoid putting them back in nappies — it confuses learning.
- Talk about different toilets (e.g., louder flushes).

MOTIVATION & PRAISE

- Praise effort, not just results.
- Stay calm about accidents — they're part of learning.
- Encourage independence wherever possible.
- Use songs, books or toys to help them stay relaxed on the potty.
- Avoid over-prompting — instead say "It's toilet time."

COMMON CHALLENGES

Constipation: Affects 1 in 3 children and can stop progress. Treat it, then return to practice.

Not drinking enough: Can cause bladder issues. Increase fluids and continue practice.

Regression: If things fall apart, pause and return to preparation and practice.

The regulation ladder

A few weeks ago we came across this amazing poster called "The regulation ladder". It's a way to understand how emotions fluctuate throughout the day. At the top of the ladder, the child is calm and ready to learn. As stress builds—noise, conflict, tiredness, hunger—they move down the ladder into states where thinking becomes harder and emotions take over. Near the bottom, children may become overwhelmed, leading to fight, flight, or freeze behaviours like shouting, running off, or shutting down.

What looks like "naughty behaviour" is often a sign that a child has slipped down the ladder and needs support, not punishment. We can help by staying calm, lowering demands, offering comfort, or simply being a steady presence. When we understand where a child is on the ladder, we can respond in ways that help them climb back up toward feeling safe and regulated again.

Small changes in support can make a big difference


The Regulation Ladder

Based on Polyvagal Theory (Porges)

The Regulation Ladder helps you understand how a child moves from calm and settled to overwhelmed. Children's behaviour changes depending on how regulated they feel. When they are calm, they can think and listen. When they are overwhelmed, they cannot. This is based on how the brain responds to stress.

www.SocialWorkersToolbox.com


The Levels

1	<p>Calm and Regulated</p> <p>Thinking brain is in control</p> 	<p>The child feels safe and settled. They can listen, learn, talk and solve problems.</p>	<p>You might see...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calm body • Focused • Listening • Cooperative • Engaged 	<p>What helps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach skills • Set boundaries • Talk it through • Give praise • Build routines
2	<p>Alert and Engaged</p> <p>Thinking brain still working, emotions increasing</p> 	<p>The child is active and coping, but energy is rising.</p>	<p>You might see...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Busy • Excited • Fidgety • Distracted • Needs reminders 	<p>What helps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear instructions • One step at a time • Gentle prompts • Keep routines • Offer choices
3	<p>Stressed or Dysregulated</p> <p>Emotional brain becoming stronger</p> 	<p>The child is starting to feel overwhelmed. Thinking becomes harder.</p>	<p>You might see...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irritable • Restless • Saying no • Avoiding • Not listening 	<p>What helps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce demands • Stay calm • Lower expectations • Offer support • Give space
4	<p>Escalated</p> <p>Emotional brain in control</p> 	<p>The child is overwhelmed and struggling to cope.</p>	<p>You might see...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arguing • Shouting • Defiant • Angry • Losing control 	<p>What helps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use few words • Stay calm • Slow things down • Give space • Keep it simple
5	<p>Overwhelmed (Meltdown or Shutdown)</p> <p>Survival brain takes over</p> 	<p>The brain is in survival mode. Fight, flight, freeze or shutdown. The thinking brain is much less available.</p>	<p>You might see...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crying • Screaming • Hitting • Freezing • Withdrawing 	<p>What helps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep safe • Stay nearby • Be calm • Offer comfort • Wait it out

Understanding the Brain
The "**thinking brain**" helps with learning, listening and making good choices. The "**emotional brain**" reacts quickly to feelings like frustration or worry. The "**survival brain**" is there to keep a child safe when they feel overwhelmed.

Why Behaviour Can Change Quickly
A child can move down the ladder very quickly. This is not planned behaviour. It is the brain reacting to stress. What looks like "bad behaviour" is often a child struggling to cope.

Your Calm Matters
Children borrow calm from adults. A calm adult helps the child's nervous system settle. A stressed adult can increase the child's stress. You do not have to be perfect, just steady enough.

 **Children need calm before they can learn. Support first. Teach later.**

May 26

SEN-Friendly Activities 2026

Here there are some activities that thought you might find useful.

THRIVE + WILD

Apart from their calm sessions on Mondays at 17:30 dedicated to SEND children and their families, they also offer a SEND Space, where you can rent their Sensory Space for 45 minutes.



GYMNASTICS STAY & PLAY

Next SEN Session
Thursday 28th May 2026 | 11:00am - 12:00pm
Southampton Gymnastics Club

A relaxed, inclusive session for children with additional needs to explore movement in a safe, supportive space. Play at their own pace alongside a parent or carer, with gentle guidance from a coach.

Climb, balance, and discover through fun, adaptable activities—no pressure, just enjoyment!

Build confidence, have fun, and connect with other families.

BOOK NOW

CLUB MEMBERS



NON-MEMBERS



02380 529952 | Admin@sotongym.co.uk | www.sotongym.co.uk

A Gymnastic SEN session during half term.



Summer Stay & Play
For Children Aged 4-8 With Special Educational Needs
A safe and inclusive group packed full of fun activities run by trained professionals

4th August
1.30 - 3.30

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10th August
9.30 - 11.30

St Barnabas Church
Fromond Road
Winchester
SO22 6EF

£5 per family
Limited spaces so booking is essential

Please note that parents/carers must stay for the entire session.
Refreshments for adults and children will be provided.

Book here!

And a Stay & Play for this summer in Winchester.

Dates for your diary

On our next Makaton Sessions we'll be looking into children songs and stories and you can attend either on the:

Thursday 4th June: 13:00-14:00

Wednesday 24th June: 9:00-10:00

Our next SOS Sessions will be happening on:

Tuesday 14th July: 13:30-15:30

Wednesday 15th July: 9:00-11:00

We will also be hosting a EHCP morning/afternoon coffee. This session is for parents on our SEN register and are staying one more year with us. We will be talking about EHCP, what it is, how to apply for it and the whole process. We will contact you and let you know the date and time.

Feedback

We'd love to hear from you! If you have any questions, thoughts, or suggestions for future editions of this newsletter, please get in touch with Raquel at r.andresgarcia@lanterns.hants.sch.uk

Your feedback helps us make each issue more useful and enjoyable for everyone.