

SEN Newsletter

Welcome back everyone to our newsletter. In this February issue you'll, hopefully, find lots of ideas and tips to help your little ones over the half term and beyond.

We can't believe another six weeks have just gone by, it feels like Christmas was last week and so far away at the same time.

Why is my child different at home and in nursery school?

We know some of you are asking yourselves this question, unfortunately there is no one straightforward answer. It's a very common, and confusing, experience for parents. We would like to help you with this by explaining a bit why this happens and how you can support your child.

Usually, **different places bring out different roles**. At home, your child is with the people they trust most. Which means letting out big feelings, testing boundaries and showing tiredness or overwhelm. However, at nursery children often step into a more "public" version of themselves by following group routines, copying peers and, sometimes, holding emotions.

Emotional regulation works differently with parents as young children often "save" their hardest feelings for the people they feel safest with. Nursery staff may see a calm, cooperative child because your child is working hard to keep it together in a stimulating environment. Then they come home, decompress, and release everything.

Usually **expectations and structure vary** between home and nursery. In the latter there are usually more predictable routines, clear boundaries and activities designed for attention spans. Home can often be naturally more flexible and emotionally rich, which can make behaviour more intense.

Nursery is a very busy place, and after sharing, waiting, listening and playing, children are exhausted. By the time they're home, their "battery" is low, and that can show up as clinginess, irritability, or meltdowns.

Now, we would like to give you some **tips** to support your children after school.

Children thrive with predictability, so creating a "landing routine" can help children shift their mindset from nursery to home mode. Some examples of these routines can be:

- Shoes off → cuddle on the sofa → snack
- Coat on hook → choose a quiet activity → parent sits nearby
- 5 minutes of silence/light play before any questions

When children are dysregulated, they need relationships first, not instructions. So you could try sitting close, saying something grounding like, "It's been a big day, I'm here now" or a long hug or gentle physical contact if they like it

You can also keep after-nursery time low-demand. As their "coping battery" is empty it is good to avoid asking lots of questions, immediate transitions or high-energy or noisy environments. Instead, offer quiet plans, simple choices and time to decompress.

It could be also helpful to use sensory regulation tools such as a crunchy or chewy snack, a warm bath, jumping on a mini trampoline, playdough or kinetic sand or a cosy corner with soft textures.

We know that they might have the “after-school meltdown”. We as parents often feel like we’re doing something wrong. WE ARE NOT. However, children release emotions where they feel safest. You can help them by staying calm, naming feelings (“It looks like you’re tired and full of feelings from your day.”), keeping boundaries gentle but consistent.

How to support my child over half term.

We know children (and parents) might find it difficult to “survive” half term. It’s a full week without that help and support that nursery offers. Here there are some tips or ideas to help you:

Keep a **predictable routine** (not a strict timetable): As you already know children often cope better when the day has a familiar flow. A simple rhythm might be:

Morning activity → Snack → Outdoor time → Lunch → Quiet time → Afternoon activity → Screen time / wind-down → Bedtime routine

Prepare them for changes ahead of time, if you can. You can talk through the plan the night before, using pictures or symbols or a social story about half term, and you can always offer choices: Do you want to go to the park or baking.

Build in **sensory regulation** time as sensory breaks help prevent overwhelm. You can suggest deep pressure, movement breaks, calm corners with headphones or fidgets or maybe some water play or play-doh.

Keep **outings short, simple, and low-pressure**. Long days out can be exhausting. Short, predictable activities are usually easier. You can go to the library, visit the garden centre, soft play, or just take a quiet walk. And, remember, if an outing becomes too much, it’s okay to leave early.

Create a “boredom-proof” **activity box** with their favourite toys such as legos, stickers, bubbles or favourite snacks.

Use **clear communication and transitions**. As we said before, children tend to cope better when they know what’s happening, how long it will last and what happens next. You can always use timers, first-then language, or countdown warnings.

Protect your own energy. You matter too. A calm adult helps create a calm child. Give yourself permission to Use screen time strategically, Keep meals simple, Lower expectations or Take turns with another adult if possible

SOS Sessions

We recently held two more SOS (Share Our Strategies) sessions, and once again it was wonderful to see parents supporting one another and sharing their experiences. We always come prepared with topics and ideas, but what we enjoy most is when you take the lead and make the session your own.

As always we are offering two sessions one a morning one and one in the afternoon.

Session dates:

- Monday, 23rd March at 9:00
- Thursday, 26th March at 13:00

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And just a reminder: joining doesn't mean you have to share. If you'd prefer simply to listen, that's absolutely fine. There will be coffee, tea, and biscuits, so it can also be a chance to relax in good company.

Makaton for parents

We truly believe that offering children an additional way to communicate supports their learning and development, whether or not they experience communication difficulties. Since Makaton is such a powerful tool, we're excited to launch our very first Makaton for Parents sessions.

Session dates:

- Wednesday, 25th February at 14:30
- Tuesday, 3rd March at 9:00

If you plan to attend any of our sessions, whether the SOS workshop or Makaton for Parents (or both), please let us know so we can plan accordingly.

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.

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