

KS1-5

The sleep factor



*Please read this guidance before teaching the lessons

Teacher guidance

This guidance document accompanies the PSHE Association's The sleep factor lesson pack on the importance of healthy sleep. These lessons are for key stages 1–5 and aim to raise awareness of the impact of good quality sleep, and to equip young people with the skills and strategies they need to get better sleep. The lesson pack includes one lesson for each of the key stages.

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 this guidance before teaching the lessons.

Introduction

Why teaching about healthy sleep is important

As part of the Department for Education's 2019 statutory guidance for Relationships, Sex and Health Education, pupils should understand the importance of sufficient good quality sleep for good health and recognise that a lack of sleep can affect weight, mood and ability to learn. Research shows that only 42% of young people are getting 8.5 hours of sleep on a school night¹, in addition to this there is also a worrying decline in young people's happiness², with the steepest decline in girls aged 7–10 (from 56% to 28% in 10 years). There is ongoing research into the bidirectional relationship between mental health and sleep, highlighting that quality sleep is crucial for good mental health, but sleep issues can worsen mental health conditions, and mental health problems can lead to poor sleep³. Research also suggests that young people are spending less time outdoors and being active, and more time on screens – all factors that can impact sleep quality. It's therefore important that young people are supported to manage these different influences on sleep, and able to make informed decisions to support them with good quality sleep, and their broader health and wellbeing.

Preparing to teach

These lessons are not designed to be taught in isolation and should form part of the overall programme for PSHE education in your school. Please see Appendix 1 for curriculum links to the PSHE Association's Programme of Study and the Department for Education's Relationships, Sex and Health Education statutory guidance. They would fit best within the context of a planned series of lessons looking at healthy balanced lifestyles.

¹ Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study in England, 2021–22, www.hbsc.org

² Girlguiding, Girls' attitudes survey, 2023: www.girlguiding.org.uk/girls-making-change/girls-attitudes-survey

³ Sleep foundation, Mental health and sleep, 2024: www.sleepfoundation.org/mental-health

For example:

- **Key stage 1:** this lesson would fit well within teaching about physical wellbeing or during teaching about mental health. It could also be delivered to year 2 pupils when preparing for the transition to key stage 2.
- **Key stage 2:** this lesson would work best after pupils have learnt about the physical and emotional changes that take place during puberty.
- **Key stage 3:** the lesson is aimed at supporting pupils with the move from year 6 to year 7, so would be most effective for classes who have recently started secondary school.
- **Key stage 4:** this lesson would work well as part of wider teaching on effective study habits.
- **Key stage 5:** the lesson could sit within wider learning about increasing independence.

The lesson plans are based on one-hour lessons. The timings given are the minimum time required to deliver the activities. Whilst it is always important for PSHE education lessons to be pacy, it is equally important to meet the needs of your pupils. More may be gained from spending longer on an activity that has fired up discussion and imagination, so long as you are comfortable leading the discussion and feel pupils are progressing towards the lesson objectives. When this is the case, it may be more appropriate for your group to extend the lesson plan across two lessons.

Creating a safe learning environment

A safe learning environment helps pupils feel comfortable with sharing their ideas and opinions without attracting negative feedback, and will help teachers to manage discussions on sensitive issues confidently. It is good practice to:

- work with pupils to establish ground rules about how they will behave in discussion, such as;
 - Everyone has the right to be heard and respected.
 - We will use language that won't offend or upset other people.
 - We won't judge or make assumptions about anyone, their feelings, or experiences.
 - We will comment on what was said, not the person who said it.
 - We won't share our own personal experiences, or those of anyone we know.
 - We won't put anyone on the spot, and we have a right to pass.
- offer opportunities for pupils to discuss issues in small groups as well as sharing views with the class
- make a box/envelope available for pupils to put questions or concerns in (anonymously if they wish), to avoid having to voice them in front of the class
- provide factually accurate, up to date information
- provide balanced arguments to help pupils clarify their own opinions
- be sensitive to the needs and experiences of individuals – some pupils may have direct experience of the issues covered
- use distancing strategies to discourage personal disclosures in the classroom, allow pupils to explore topics objectively, 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 wellbeing
- make pupils aware of sources of support, both in 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 5–12-year-olds	
Issue	Explanation
Sleep requirements	Children of this age need 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 need less sleep, while others might need more – sleep needs vary between 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/carer. 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.
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Sleep in 13–18-year-olds	
Issue	Explanation
Sleep requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 weekdays.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
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 and avoiding lying in at weekends. They should aim to get 9 hours of sleep each night. • Some people find afternoon naps helpful, but they should be 15–30 minutes maximum and in the early afternoon.

	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The time before bed (at least 60 minutes) should allow for winding down and should 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), to support this. • 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 they can lead to dependency, and a person’s sleep problems can return when they stop taking the pills. • 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 with falling asleep and sleeping deeply, although ideally teenagers should avoid exercising too close to bedtime.
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Assessment

The main model of assessment used in these PSHE lessons is ipsative assessment. This compares where a pupil is at the end of a lesson or series of lessons, against where they were at the start/before the lesson(s). To assess learning and progress effectively, this lesson pack includes:

- baseline assessments to gauge pupils’ existing knowledge, understanding, skills, strategies/beliefs/attitudes, and to identify any gaps or misconceptions relating to healthy sleep. This can help you to tailor the content of the lessons to address these gaps and misconceptions. Baseline assessments are most effective when introduced without any additional prompting
- formative assessment opportunities embedded into the lesson pack through guided discussion, peer and self-assessment and feedback following each activity
- endpoint assessments – which revisit the baseline assessments and learning outcomes – to allow pupils to demonstrate the progress they have made from their starting point

For more information and guidance on assessment in PSHE education, see our [assessment guides](#).

Differentiation

These lessons include support and challenge recommendations to enable all pupils to access the learning and make progress. These suggestions are intended to support you to differentiate learning appropriately, however, you know your pupils best and may find that the activities need further adaptation. If the lessons require additional adaptation for specific needs, you may find it helpful to refer to the [PSHE Association Planning Framework for pupils with SEND](#).

Extension activities are provided at the end of each lesson, to support you to extend and deepen the learning further - for the whole class if time allows, for individuals who require further challenge, or to be used as home learning if appropriate.

Signposting support

Support for pupils

Ensure pupils know where they can seek help and further advice, now and in the future, if they have questions or concerns related to healthy sleep. Remind pupils that they can ask for help and advice from trusted adults at home, outside the home, in school or from appropriate organisations. Age-appropriate website details have been selected from the list below and included in each lesson plan to share with pupils:

- Childline: www.childline.org.uk/ ; 0800 1111
- Young Minds: www.youngminds.org.uk
- NHS advice: www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-health-issues/sleep
- The Sleep Charity: www.thesleepcharity.org.uk/information-support/children/relaxation-tips/
- The Evelina London Children's healthcare: www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/our-services/hospital/sleep-medicine-department/how-to-sleep-well-for-teenagers.aspx
- The Teen Sleep Hub: www.teensleephub.org.uk

Appendix 1: Links to the Programme of Study and DfE’s statutory guidance on Relationships, Sex and Health education

Learning objective	Learning outcomes	Programme of Study	DfE statutory guidance
<p>Key stage 1: To learn about the things that will help us to fall asleep and get a good night’s sleep.</p>	<p>Pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • suggest some reasons why sleep is important • identify things that might stop someone getting to sleep • describe some things that might help someone get to sleep 	<p>H4. about why sleep is important and different ways to rest and relax</p> <p>H17. about things that help people feel good (e.g. playing outside, doing things they enjoy, spending time with family, getting enough sleep</p>	<p>Primary Mental wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simple self-care techniques, including the importance of rest, time spent with friends and family and the benefits of hobbies and interests <p>Health and prevention</p>
<p>Key stage 2: To learn about routines that support good quality sleep.</p>	<p>Pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain why sleep is important for a healthy lifestyle • identify how sleep patterns might change during puberty • describe habits, including bedtime routines, that can help to improve sleep 	<p>H2. about the elements of a balanced, healthy lifestyle</p> <p>H3. about choices that support a healthy lifestyle, and recognise what might influence these</p> <p>H4. how to recognise that habits can have both positive and negative effects on a healthy lifestyle</p> <p>H8. about how sleep contributes to a healthy lifestyle; routines that support good quality sleep; the effects of lack of sleep on the body, feelings, behaviour and ability to learn</p> <p>H16. about strategies and behaviours that</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the importance of sufficient good quality sleep for good health and that a lack of sleep can affect weight, mood and ability to learn. <p>Secondary Mental wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to critically evaluate when something they do or are involved in has a positive or negative effect on their own or others’ mental health. <p>Health and prevention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the importance of sufficient good

		<p>support mental health — including how good quality sleep, physical exercise/time outdoors, being involved in community groups, doing things for others, clubs, and activities, hobbies and spending time with family and friends can support mental health and wellbeing</p>	<p>quality sleep for good health and how a lack of sleep can affect weight, mood and ability to learn.</p>
<p>Key stage 3: To learn about healthier sleep habits.</p>	<p>Pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the impact of sleep on health and wellbeing • identify factors that can reduce sleep quality • describe a range of strategies for ensuring healthier sleep patterns 	<p>H13. the importance of, and strategies for, maintaining a balance between school, work, leisure, exercise, and online activities</p> <p>H15. the importance of sleep and strategies to maintain good quality sleep</p>	
<p>Key stage 4: To learn about the importance of sleep and strategies to maintain healthier sleep habits.</p>	<p>Pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the importance of sleep for wellbeing and brain function • assess how lifestyle choices can affect sleep quality • analyse how a range of strategies can support healthier sleep patterns 	<p>H5. the characteristics of mental and emotional health; to develop empathy and understanding about how daily actions can affect people’s mental health</p> <p>H11. to make informed lifestyle choices regarding sleep, diet and exercise</p> <p>H16. how to take increased personal responsibility for maintaining and monitoring health (including cancer prevention, screening and self-examination)</p>	

<p>Key stage 5: To learn about managing sleep routines independently, and the impact of sleep on professional and personal wellbeing.</p>	<p>Pupils will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the challenges of independently managing sleep routines while transitioning into work or higher education • analyse the impact of sleep on productivity and wellbeing in both personal and professional contexts • develop individual and societal strategies that promote positive sleep habits 	<p>H13. how to maintain work-life balance, including understanding the importance of continuing with regular exercise and sleep, and balancing time online</p> <p>H9. to consistently access reliable sources of information and evaluate media messages about health; and how to make informed decisions about health.</p> <p>H4. to recognise signs of change in mental health and wellbeing and demonstrate a range of strategies for building and maintaining positive mental health, including managing stress and anxiety</p>	
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