

# Barnet Virtual School Newsletter

Spring Term 2 2023

Welcome to the second Spring Term newsletter from the Virtual School. We hope you all had a restful break.

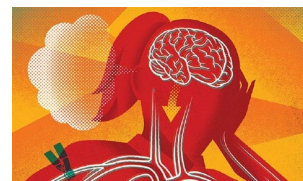
Thank you very much to all of you who have already completed the PEP for this term. It is always interesting to see how the children are getting on and it is impressive how much thought has gone into them. It is obvious that they are written with the child in mind and to make a difference.

**Just a reminder that the deadline for Spring PEPs is the 24th February.** Please ensure that your PEP meetings have happened and the PEP document is complete. **For statutory age children, any PEPs completed after this date will not be able to have funding agreed.** This is because all funding has to be processed before the end of the financial year. Please remember that we hold both recovery funding and Pupil Premium Plus funding for looked after children and that you can request this through the PEP attached to an outcome for the young person. Any questions please just get in touch.

Sarah Deale Virtual School Headteacher

## Exam Anxiety and how you can help

Exams and tests can be stressful whether they are KS2 SATs or GCSEs or A 'levels. Some children will become more anxious than others and for looked after children this can be a real issue. This might be due to having missed a lot of schooling or having had multiple school moves, negative previous experience of exams, worry about failure, or having had little support with education. For children and young people who are generally anxious, the experience of taking exams can be very threatening and can lead to unmanageable increases in anxiety levels. Children who have mental health difficulties, may also be more likely to experience academic anxiety.



**Identifying the signs** Signs of academic stress can sometimes be difficult to identify. Children and young people may not want to talk about stress they are experiencing.

Children and young people who are affected by anxiety and stress about tests and school work may:

- Complain of physical health problems (e.g. stomach aches, headaches etc.).
- Not be sleeping or eating properly.
- Have mood changes, such as being tearful, angry or withdrawn.
- Be reluctant to attend school or talk about tests and exams.
- Spend too much time on their work or alternatively avoid schoolwork.
- Be overly self-critical of themselves and of any mistakes they make.
- Become obsessive in the way they work – unwilling or unable to break off.

## Exam Anxiety and how you can help

**How can you help?** At a basic level there are three things you can do:



1. **Provide reassurance** It sounds obvious but remind pupils of past successes and give them the opportunity to say how they are feeling.

2. **Support exam preparation** Hold revision classes, create study schedules for pupils and encourage them to revise in pairs or groups. Later this term we will be sending all Year 11s a revision guide to support everything you are doing in school

3. **Share relaxation techniques** Controlled breathing and mindfulness techniques can help calm anxieties around exams. Lots of the sites below have useful ideas to use with young people.

### Useful Resources

#### Primary age

This resource has lots of tips and resources for dealing with stress [Coping with stress | Childline](#) There is also a toolkit with a Coping Kit

A tip sheet for children to help them cope with stress when it arises. [Coping with Stress for Kids \(parentingni.org\)](#)

#### Secondary

This booklet offers practical tips and advice for students on coping with exam stress and feelings of worry.

[exam\\_stress\\_print.pdf \(studentminds.org.uk\)](#)

#### Further Education

Information for college staff on how to identify if a student is struggling with exam and assessment stress, and how to support them. [Exam and assessment stress \(mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk\)](#)

#### All

This Ofqual blog has some useful ideas on how schools can help with exam and test anxiety

[What can schools do about examination and test anxiety - The Ofqual blog](#)

#### For more support, see:

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with-life/exam-stress/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/help-your-child-beat-exam-stress/>

<https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-involved/teaching-resources/tackling-exam-stress>

<https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/risks-and-protective-factors/school-based-risk-factors/academic-and-exam-stress/>



**Remember to take care of yourself too as tests and exams are a stressful time for staff. Trust that you have equipped your pupils well for their exams. Remember, you can do a lot for the children you support, but sometimes you can't do it all.**

**N.B. If you have not seen it, there is new DfE guidance on Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) . It includes an example of effective practice for a pupil experiencing anxiety about exams.**

## Training

### Body Based approaches to working with children and young people who have experienced trauma



This course is relevant to all D.Ts, safeguarding leads or any school staff and is free to ALL schools. You do not need to buy into BPSI.

This course will:

- Explore how trauma affects a child's nervous system and what happens when they are triggered into a fight/flight/freeze response.
- Develop an understanding of how trauma can impact a child's sensory regulation and sensory/physical development.
- Explore practical approaches to soothe a child's nervous system when in fight/flight/freeze (including individual and whole class approaches)

**Leader:** Dr Amy Gibb—Educational Psychologist

**23rd February 2023 9:30 - 12:00** This will be in person at the PDC

## Key Contacts at the Virtual School

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Follow us on Twitter to keep up with news and opportunities to support our young people.  
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You can also find us on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#)!