

# Healthy Schools: Stockton-on-Tees Newsletter



## Healthy Schools

Stockton-on-Tees

February 2026 – Family Edition



## Nutrition and oral health

### Healthy pancakes



Image: BBC Good Food

Celebrate Pancake Day the right way with BBC Good Food's healthy pancakes recipes!

With recipes low in sugar or vegan alternatives, there's sure to be a recipe to suit everyone!

So get flipping and try out a new healthy pancake recipe this Shrove Tuesday!

[Healthy banana pancakes recipe | Good Food](#)

### Portion sizes made simple: a handy guide for families



Written by Brian Bennett, MSc Dietetic student. Image :iStock

Knowing how much food to serve your child can feel confusing. Food packets, calories, and measuring scales aren't always practical for busy families. A simple, flexible tool you can use anywhere is your hand.

Because hands grow as children grow, using them as a portion guide works across ages.

- **Fruit and veg:** A portion is about the size of your **child's cupped handful**. Aim for at least five portions a day from a variety of colours.
- **Carbohydrates** (bread, rice, pasta, potatoes): One portion is roughly the size of your **child's fist**. Include a portion at each main meal for energy.
- **Protein foods** (meat, fish, beans, eggs, pulses): A portion is about the size of your **child's palm**. Try to include these in two meals per day.
- **Cheese:** About the size of **two thumbs**.
- **Fats and spreads:** Just a **fingertip** amount.

This flexible method helps prevent oversized portions and supports a healthy balance without the need for weighing.

**Top tip: Encourage children to be involved in serving their own portions — it helps them learn about hunger, fullness, and healthy eating habits.**

For more information, see the [NHS Eatwell Guide](#).

## Physical activity

### Holidays Are Fun



Fun, food and friends this February half-term!

Bookings are now open for thousands of places at free and exciting Holidays Are Fun (HAF) activity sessions during the February half-term!

There's a wide range of sessions running from Monday 23 February to Friday 27 February for eligible school age children from Reception to Year 11, including horse riding, bush craft, sports, arts and crafts, and SEND specific sessions.

A free nutritious meal is provided each day for every child taking part.

To be eligible, families must be in receipt of benefits-related free school meals.

[Find out more about the HAF programme and book a place.](#)

The programme is funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

## Mental health, wellbeing and resilience

### MMRV vaccine



#### **Did you know about the changes to the routine childhood immunisation schedule?**

Children are now being offered the MMRV vaccine. As well as protecting against measles, mumps, and rubella, it now also protects against chickenpox (varicella).

#### **Why should we protect against chickenpox?**

Chickenpox involves an itchy, painful rash on the skin and a high temperature. Children cannot attend nursery or school until all blisters have crusted over which may mean they miss out on education and parents miss work.

While most children get better on their own, some will experience complications such as chest infection, fits, and encephalitis (brain swelling). Complications are also more common in adults, pregnant women, and those with a weakened immune system.

#### **Is the vaccine safe?**

**YES!** This vaccine was tested to make sure it was safe before it was used. It has been used for over a decade in Canada, Australia, and Germany.

Side effects can happen and might include your child being sleepier than usual, or they might

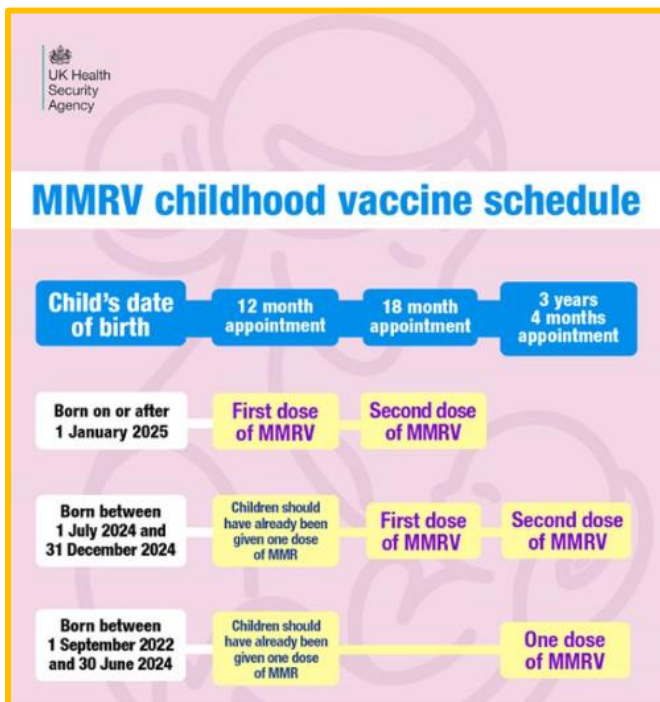
want more cuddles. Their arm or leg where the injection goes may be sore and red. They might feed more or less than usual. They might have a temperature; you should use baby paracetamol to manage this. A nurse will discuss this with you at your appointment, feel free to write down any questions you have!

The possible side effects are much milder than the serious illnesses they protect against.

### Is the vaccine Halal?

There are currently two vaccines available. Only Priorix Tetra is Halal, but it is just as safe and effective as the other vaccine. When booking an appointment request the Halal version.

### When should a child get the vaccine?



Different children will be offered the vaccine at different times depending on their date of birth. If you haven't been invited by your GP, give them a ring.

If your child misses a dose of MMRV they can catch up at any age, but it's best to get protected as soon as possible!

## Find NHS urgent dental care



Adults and children can access NHS urgent dental appointments to diagnose and treat problems like:

- toothache that causes pain that does not stop or ease with over-the-counter pain relief
- swelling in the mouth or face, like abscesses or infections, that causes pain or fever
- broken or knocked-out teeth
- bleeding from the mouth or gums
- loose or broken fillings that cause pain
- problems with the soft areas of the mouth

You now have three ways to find urgent dental care. Appointments are available by:

1. contacting an NHS dentist
2. booking an appointment at an urgent dental access centre
3. contacting 111.nhs.uk or calling 111

**Normal NHS charges and exemptions apply.**

[Read full details about urgent dental appointments and how to book them.](#)

## **Breathwork**



### **What is breathwork and why does it matter?**

In busy environments, people are often expected to think, learn, behave and perform while under constant pressure. One of the simplest, most powerful tools we have to support resilience and readiness to take on new things is something we all do every moment of the day — breathing.

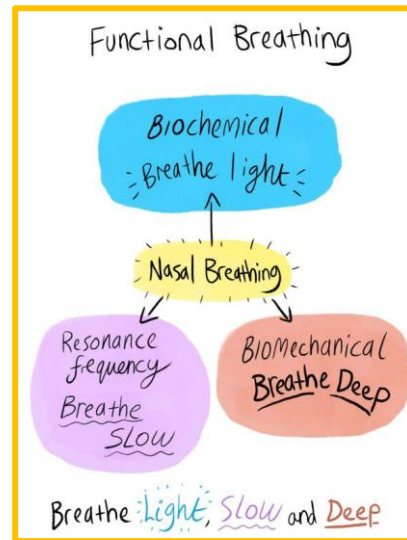
Breathwork is not about deep breathing all the time. It is about learning how to breathe well, in a way that supports the nervous system.

Breathing is an automatic function that we can control consciously, and it has a direct link to the nervous system.

When breathing is fast, shallow or held — often seen during times of stress, anxiety or overload — the body can shift into a fight, flight or freeze state. This makes it harder for pupils to focus, regulate emotions, process information or feel safe.

When breathing is slower, more balanced and nasal, it sends a signal of safety to the brain. This helps activate the part of the nervous system responsible for rest, learning, digestion and social engagement — the state where children learn best.

### **A regulated breath supports a regulated brain.**



Healthy breathing habits can support:

- Improved focus and concentration
- Reduced anxiety and emotional overwhelm
- Better behaviour and self-regulation
- Increased resilience to stress
- Improved sleep and energy levels
- Support for children experiencing anxiety, school avoidance or sensory overload

Healthy breathing supports more than calm — it plays a role in posture, sleep, immune health, emotional resilience and physical wellbeing. Learning how to breathe well is a preventative health tool, not just a calming strategy.

By embedding breath awareness into school culture, we help create environments where children and staff feel safer, calmer and more ready to learn.

Sometimes, the smallest shift — one gentle breath — can create the biggest change.

For more information, training and guidance:

- <https://oxygenadvantage.com/pages/oa-breathing-app>
- [Free Online Breathwork Classes — Breathing Space](#)
- [Dorothy Nelson | Breathwork Professional in STOCKTON-ON-TEES, England United Kingdom | Breathing Space](#)

## Safer Sleep Week – 9 to 15 March



[Safer Sleep Week](#) is The Lullaby Trust’s national awareness campaign aimed at anyone looking after a young baby.

The safest cot for a baby is a clear cot. Follow The Lullaby Trust’s evidence-based safer sleep advice to keep your baby safe:

- Lie baby on their back at the foot of the cot (feet-to-foot), so they can’t wriggle down under bedding
- Keep the cot clear of unnecessary items
- Use a firm, flat, waterproof mattress
- Keep baby smoke-free
- Avoid letting baby get too hot
- Sleep baby in the same room as you for at least the first six months

The Lullaby Trust also offer [confidential bereavement support](#) to anyone affected by the sudden and unexpected death of a baby or young child.

Did you know there is a Children’s Health Services App? Download for free from [Google Play](#) or the [App Store](#) and go to the Safe Sleep tab for more information and advice.

## No Smoking Day



No Smoking Day (Wednesday 11 March) is all about helping you to make a quit attempt for better health, more money, and more time with the people who matter most.

Smoking causes 16 types of cancer, and just one cigarette a day increases the risks of heart attack and stroke.

Whether it’s your first try or your tenth, support is available to help you quit for good.

Visit [FreshQuit.co.uk](https://www.freshquit.co.uk) for tips and advice.

Support is available locally for those aged 12 and over from the Stockton Specialist Stop Smoking Service.

If you have recently had a baby, you can access our postnatal pregnancy voucher incentive scheme. Refer yourself to the Specialist Stop Smoking Service and you will get a high street voucher to spend at key points of your smoke free journey. This is available until the baby reaches the age of one year.

Email [nth-tr.smokingcessation@nhs.net](mailto:nth-tr.smokingcessation@nhs.net) or call 01642 383819 to make a referral, or visit [www.nth.nhs.uk/services/stop-smoking-service](https://www.nth.nhs.uk/services/stop-smoking-service) to find out more.

And residents of Stockton-on-Tees can [download the free Smoke Free app](#) and access premium features including personalised support and a Swap 2 Stop offer.

## Warm Homes Healthy People



Cold temperatures can have a serious impact on your health and wellbeing. Keeping warm and healthy during the cold weather can help keep illness away.

Working with Cleveland Fire Brigade and Stockton District Advice and Information Services, we can help with:

- Boiler repairs
- Emergency heating
- Energy saving advice and energy saving schemes
- Advice and support to help keep you healthy and more able to cope with cold weather

The boiler repair scheme is only available to homeowners with gas central heating systems, living in the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees, and runs from Wednesday 1 October 2025 until Tuesday 31 March 2026.

You may be eligible for a boiler repair if you are the homeowner and claiming a means-tested benefit and you are any of the following:

- 65 or over
- Under 65 and in receipt of disability benefits
- Under 65 and have a long term illness made worse by the cold or live with a

- child (under 5) who has a long term illness made worse by the cold
- Living with dementia

If you would like advice or further information, please call 01642 528215.

Opening hours are:

- Monday to Thursday, 8:30am to 5pm
- Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm

**In a heating emergency outside of office hours, contact the Cleveland Fire Brigade on 01429 874063, who can provide heaters and other equipment 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**

For more information please visit: [Warm Homes Healthy People - Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council](#)

## A Second Dance – Prom Pop-ups



We have collected over 200 outfits and accessories that young people who are preparing for Prom 2026 can choose from. To date over 30 outfits have found new owners. Our [video](#) will give you a flavour of what we have planned.

We will be holding a series of pop-up shops over the months that follow so you can come and browse the rails at times that suit you. The dates are as follows:

- Wednesday 25 February - 1 - 4pm
- Wednesday 8 April - 1 - 4pm
- Wednesday 15 April - 1 - 4pm
- Wednesday 27 May - 1 - 4pm

**It is not too late to donate an outfit.** If you would like to donate, please contact [fsot@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:fsot@stockton.gov.uk)

## **National Year of Reading 2026**



In 2026, a national spotlight is being put on reading and on the simplest way to help children enjoy it: connecting it to what they already love. From dinosaurs to dancing, from comics to cooking, passions make stories feel natural and fun.

Across the UK, children are reading less than they used to and stories aren't getting the same space they once did. It is disappearing from daily life and it's happening across all age groups, from toddlers to teenagers.

When reading drops, confidence, imagination and learning take a hit as well. Children feel the impact: reading helps children focus, express themselves, develop their curiosity, and it gives families an opportunity to connect.

The National Year of Reading 2026 is your chance to help your child discover new worlds, grow confidence and build a lifelong love of reading, all through the everyday moments you already share.

For families, the National Year of Reading also means more support, more ideas and more opportunities to weave reading into busy routines, whatever age your child is.

It's never too early to start sharing stories. Babies in the womb can already hear sounds and recognise familiar voices, so reading and talking to them during pregnancy is a lovely way to begin.

For tips, advice, book lists, library finder and an event calendar, please visit:

<https://goallin.org.uk/get-involved/families/>

## **World Book Day – 5 March 2026**



World Book Day will be bigger and better than ever during the National Year of Reading, 2026. World Book Day is a proud delivery partner of National Year of Reading.

To listen to new free audiobooks, tips, reading resources and how to use your £1 book token. Please visit the World Book Day's website [here](#).

# Services and support

February 2026

## General information

[Family Hubs](#)

[Footsteps Youth Wellbeing](#)

[NHS Better Health: Healthier Families](#)

[NHS NENC: Healthier Together](#)

Single Point of Contact (0-19 Service)  
0333 3202 302

[Stockton Information Directory](#)

## Mental health, wellbeing and resilience

[Anna Freud](#)

[Beat Eating Disorders](#)

[Brook](#)

[CAMHS Training for Parents/Carers](#)

[CGL Young People's Service](#)  
07730616766 or 07884568823  
[stocktonyp@cgl.org.uk](mailto:stocktonyp@cgl.org.uk)

[Cost of Living Support](#)

[Cruse Bereavement Support](#)  
0808 808 1677

[Eastern Ravens Trust](#)  
01642 678454  
[info@easternravenstrust.org](mailto:info@easternravenstrust.org)

[Harbour](#) 03000 20 25 25

[Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees Children's Hub](#)  
01642 130080 or 01642 524552 (out of hours)

[Impact on Teesside](#)

[Teesside Mind](#)

[Moving On Asthma](#)

[swgfl \(South Western Grid for Learning\)](#)

[Stockton-on-Tees Stop Smoking Service](#)  
01642 383819

[Talk to Frank](#)  
0300 123 6600

[UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

[Young Minds](#)

## Nutrition and oral health

[British Heart Foundation](#)

[Growing Well Growing Healthy](#)  
0333 3202 302

## Physical activity and things to do

[ARC](#)

[BCT Aspire](#)

[Five Lamps Youth Clubs](#)  
<https://www.facebook.com/fivelampstheyouthy/>

[Hardwick in Partnership](#)

[Holidays Are Fun \(HAF\) Programme](#)

[Libraries](#)

[Parks](#)

[Preston Park Museum](#)

[Tees Active](#)

[Tees Valley Music Service](#)

[Tennis Courts](#)

[The Hub](#)

[Visit Tees Valley](#)