

Healthy Schools: Stockton-on-Tees Newsletter



**Healthy
Schools**
Stockton-on-Tees

March 2026 – Family Edition

Nutrition and oral health

Building a balanced packed lunch



Written by Brian Bennett, MSc Dietetic student. Image: NHS Healthier Families

Packed lunches can make a big difference to your child's health, concentration and energy levels at school. A good rule of thumb is to try and include something from each food group, to give balance and variety.

What to Include:

- **Fruit and vegetables:** Aim for at least one portion (fresh, frozen, or tinned in juice). Try sliced peppers, carrot sticks, cherry tomatoes or a small pot of fruit.
- **Starchy foods:** Provide energy for learning and play. Choose wholemeal bread, wraps, pasta salad or rice.
- **Protein foods:** Help growth and repair. Try boiled eggs, hummus, tuna, chicken, beans or cheese.
- **Dairy or alternatives:** For bone health. Include yoghurt (low-sugar if possible), cheese cubes or a milk-based drink.

- **Water:** The best drink to keep children hydrated and alert.

Foods to limit:

- Crisps, chocolate, cakes, and sugary drinks should only be occasional. These are high in fat, salt or sugar and don't provide the lasting energy children need.

Tips for variety:

- Swap plain sandwiches for wraps, bagels or pasta salads.
- Cut fruit into bite-sized pieces or add a small pot of dried fruit.
- Involve children in choosing and preparing they're more likely to eat it!
- Use leftovers (e.g., cold chicken, homemade pizza slices) to save time and reduce cost.

Remember: A balanced packed lunch doesn't need to be expensive. Simple swaps and small additions of fruit and veg can make a big difference to your child's health and wellbeing.

For more information and for ideas and recipes please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide>

<https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/recipes/healthier-lunchboxes>

Physical activity

Holidays Are Fun



Fun, food and friends this Easter!

Bookings are now open for thousands of places at free and exciting Holidays Are Fun (HAF) activity sessions during the Easter school holidays!

There's a wide range of sessions running from Tuesday 7 April to Friday 17 April 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. Check if you are eligible for free school meals and apply at www.stockton.gov.uk/free-school-meals.

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

Scan to register:

 www.stockton.gov.uk/haf

 01642 527752

 HAF@stockton.gov.uk



Fred Perry Tennis Trust community programme



'We Do Tennis' are now beginning the process of identifying children who may benefit from taking part in the free park tennis sessions that will be delivered at Littleboy Park, Thornaby.

Fred Perry Tennis Trust community programme will provide 10 weeks of completely free tennis sessions (3 hours per week) for Key Stage 1 & 2 children, specifically aimed at families on lower incomes and children who may not normally have the opportunity to access tennis.

To help us reach the right families, we have created a short Player Expression of Interest form which can be shared with parents:

<https://forms.gle/wDT96YnBDeZcY4F56>

Launch Month - Stockton-on-Tees Tennis



It's launch month!

As we roll into April, you'll be pleased to hear that we're kicking off the tennis season with a bang!

Which means that across Stockton-on-Tees, our Park Tennis Venues will be rocking with lots of activities to get you on court. So if you're looking to try out tennis for the first time or you're an existing member, you'll find plenty going on for all ages and abilities:

- Barclays LTA FREE Park Tennis
- Barclays LTA Big Tennis Weekend
- "Ace The Basics" For Beginners
- Adult & Junior Coaching Sessions
- Rebound - Disability & Inclusion

Bring a friend with you!

For further information please visit

www.wdtvenues.co.uk/stockton-parks

Mental health, wellbeing and resilience

Petting zoo safety!



Have fun, stay safe, be kind to animals.

Animals can carry **germs** even when they look healthy. These germs can lead to tummy bugs especially in children under 5, pregnant women and older adults. Here are some simple ways to stay safe:

- **Wash hands** with warm water and soap after touching animals, fences, or surfaces **and always before eating.**
- **Don't use hand gels as a substitute** as they don't kill all farm-related germs.
- Watch children closely to make sure they wash their hands properly and **don't put fingers in their mouths.**
- **Don't take food, drinks, or dummies** into areas with animals.
- **Don't kiss the animals.**
- Wear closed shoes and clean them (and pushchair wheels) after your visit.
- **Wash clothes at 60°C** if they've been in contact with animals.

If you or your child experience diarrhoea and/or vomiting after a day at the farm, ring your GP and let them know about your trip.

Scan the QR code above or visit [How to have a fun and healthy farm visit with the family – UK Health Security Agency](#) for more information.

Meningitis outbreak



The image above details the symptoms of meningitis and sepsis to be aware of.

The UK Health Security Agency has reported an outbreak of Meningitis in Kent which you may have seen in the news. Meningitis is a very serious illness that progresses quickly and may need hospital care. Sadly, there have been deaths in Kent linked to this outbreak.

Meningitis is spread through close contact.

The best protection is vaccination!

Infants are offered the MenB vaccine and can catch up until age 2. Those in Year 9 are offered the MenACWY vaccine. If you missed having the vaccine you can get it up to the age of 25 years.

Someone with meningitis or sepsis can get a lot worse very quickly.

Trust your instincts and **do not wait for all the symptoms to appear or until a rash develops.** Call 999 for an ambulance or go to [your nearest](#)

[A&E](#) immediately if you think you or someone you look after could have meningitis or sepsis.

Use [NHS 111 online](#) or call [NHS 111](#) for advice if you're not sure if it's anything serious.

If you've had medical advice and are still worried or any symptoms get worse, get medical help again.

For more information about meningitis and sepsis please see: [Meningitis and sepsis symptoms - Meningitis Research Foundation](#)

[Meningitis - NHS](#)

For more information about vaccines that can protect you and your family, please see: [NHS vaccinations and when to have them - NHS](#)

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact HealthProtection@stockton.gov.uk

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 at 22 Wellington Street, Wellington Square over the months that follow so you can come and browse the rails at times that suit you. The dates are as follows:

- Wednesday 8 April - 1 to 4pm
- Wednesday 15 April - 1 to 4pm
- Wednesday 27 May - 1 to 4pm

It is not too late to donate an outfit. If you would like to donate, please contact fsot@stockton.gov.uk

What you told us about music in the Tees Valley: TVMS



You had your say and we loved hearing it! Hundreds of families and young people across the Tees Valley shared their thoughts in our recent survey about music lessons, ensembles and future opportunities. Thank you to everyone who took part — your voices are shaping what happens next.

What children and young people told us

We received so many uplifting responses. Some of our favourites:

- *“Nothing stops me — I love music!”*
- *“Music is my freedom and my joy.”*
- *“Playing with others is the best part.”*
- *“My teacher helps me love learning violin.”*
- *“The choir is great — it makes me happy every week.”*

Many children also said they want **more chances to perform**, more **bands, digital music and modern styles**, and more **ensembles close to home**.

What parents and carers told us:

Families shared thoughtful and often heartfelt messages:

- *“Music has built my child’s confidence — thank you.”*
- *“Costs can be hard. Making music affordable is really important.”*
- *“My daughter’s anxiety melts away when she’s making music.”*

- *“We only found out about TVMS by accident — please promote what you offer more!”*

The big message?

Music matters to our children — for **confidence, joy, wellbeing, friendship and aspiration**.

Families across the region are asking for more opportunities, clearer communication and accessible, inclusive provision. We’re listening, and we’re excited about what comes next.

What TVMS will do next

As the lead partner in the **Tees Valley Music Hub**, we’re using your feedback to shape the future of music in our area. Over the coming months, we’ll be:

- Considering how to expand **ensembles and community groups**
- Promoting our **in-school lesson options**
- Exploring **new contemporary and digital music pathways**
- Strengthening **SEND-inclusive experiences**
- Considering how to create more **performance opportunities**
- Improving communication so families know what’s available

Together, we can build a musical Tees Valley where every child and every family can find their place.

If you’d like to explore lessons, ensembles or community groups, we’d love to help.

Children and phone safety - NSPCC



With more choice than ever and rising concerns about safety, phone ownership can raise important questions for families.

These might be:

- Is my child ready for a phone?
- How do I keep my child safe?
- What's the right approach for our family?
- Are children and phones a good mix?

Every child is different, and the decision about when to introduce a phone is down to the parents or carers – and should be based on your child's individual needs, maturity, and circumstances. While there's no one-size-fits-all answer, this guide is here to help you weigh the pros and cons, understand signs of readiness, and set up healthy habits from the start.

To read the guide in full and for more helpful tips and advice please visit:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/children-phones-online-safety/>

Kids Online Safety campaign



The UK government has launched the 'Kids Online Safety' campaign to help parents and carers support their children to navigate the digital world safely and confidently.

With so many apps, games, and websites out there, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. But the good news is you're not alone.

The campaign brings together practical, trusted guidance on how to start meaningful conversations about online life, understand the types of content children may encounter, and build critical thinking skills so young people can question what they see and make safer choices.

To view the resources, please visit: [Help your child stay safe online - Kids Online Safety](#)



Image: iStock

Happy Easter! We wish you a restful and joyful break however you celebrate!



Services and support

March 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

[Cost of Living Support](#)

[Cruse Bereavement Support](#)
0808 808 1677

[Eastern Ravens Trust](#)
01642 678454
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](#)