

Parents and Carers Guide: Year 6 Wellbeing for SATs

Why is Year 6 wellbeing for SATs important

It is widely understood that positive health and wellbeing – including mental health – contribute to a child's ability to flourish, thrive and achieve (Public Health England, 2014), and equipping children with the skills to enhance their resilience against adversity will enable them to navigate challenges without compromising performance.

The phrase "Key Stage 2 SATs" is can be trigger for stress in teachers, parents and children all over the country. Opinion is divided over these National Assessments but it is still vital that Year 6 pupils are able to navigate SATs season without experiencing undue stress or anxiety.

Keep talking

The most positive thing you can contribute to your child's wellbeing during SATS or at any time is to talk to them, reassure them, and where possible, provide a relaxed home environment.

What can I do as a parent / carer?

- Attend any meetings the school holds about SATs.
- Direct any questions or concerns you have about SATs to your child's teacher, rather than worry your child with them.
- Give your child opportunities to go outside and avoid overuse of screens - this can apply to leisure pursuits as well as how they study.
- Try to provide a quiet corner of the house for homework and study, that's as free from distractions as possible.
- Encourage your child to talk to their teacher or another adult they trust if they express persisting anxieties about SATs. Remember that a small amount of anxiety is normal and not harmful.
- If your child is unwilling to talk to their teacher, talk to them yourself.
- Plan something nice and fun for the weekends before and after SATs – this will help your child start the week well and also give them something to look forward to.
- Ensure your child is eating and drinking well, and getting a suitable amount of sleep.

Remember this about SATs

1 SATs focus on what they know about Maths and English

They won't reflect how talented they are at Science, Geography, Art or PE, and they certainly won't highlight positive personal characteristics such as kindness and integrity.

2 SATs results don't always tell the whole story

The results will say they DID or DIDN'T meet a certain standard, but not necessarily by what margin. Additionally, the thresholds tend to change each year according to overall national performance, so what was classed as 'did meet the expected standard' in 2016 may have been considered a 'did not' in 2015. Your school may be able to provide you with more detailed feedback, so don't let your child see SATs as a simple case of 'pass' or 'fail'.

3 SATs last for one week

In reality it's just one or two papers lasting 30-60 minutes each day. You can't emphasise enough the importance of keeping that in perspective.

What should I do if I'm worried about my child?

It would be unnatural for SATs not to induce a certain degree of worry or anxiety but there is, of course, a tipping point. SATs should not:

- affect a child's appetite
- affect a child's ability to sleep
- alter a child's personality
- induce panic, tears or disengagement from lessons
- be a reason not to attend school

If any of the above are evident, then SATs may be causing an excessive degree of anxiety, and your child may benefit from additional support. This isn't about removing the reality of SATs, but rather equipping your 10 or 11 year old child to cope with the situation and be stronger for it.

Steps to take:

Talk to the school

Is your child showing the same symptoms at school as they are at home? Is there anything else going on at home which may be contributing to your child's overall level of stress? Work with the school so everyone concerned can be offering the support that's needed.

Spend time with your child

Try to understand what aspect of SATs concerns them most. Is it the worry of 'failing'? Is it the worry of getting stuck on a paper? If your child can pinpoint what's bothering them most, you can take specific steps to help reassure them.

Try not to project your own anxieties or views on the SATs

If you don't believe in SATs, or do not think your child should be doing them, then neither will they.

Confront any media coverage

Show clippings if there's been anything negative and ask them to talk about what they're seen and how they feel. Reinforce the reality.

Encourage your child to talk to their teacher

SATs are obviously linked to school, so don't be surprised if they favour the reassurance of teachers above family members!

Children are very resilient and, with support from you and the school, most will have a very positive experience of SATs.

Good luck!