Supporting Families

TALKING ABOUT PUBERTY

Relationships Education in School

Your child will be taught key concepts relating to changing, growing up and puberty throughout their time at Abbey School and Nursery:

Pre-school & Reception – the underwear rule (using NSPCC 'Pantsosaurus').
Year 3 – Touch (including naming of private parts for boys and girls and positive relationships)
Year 4 – Appropriate touch (including what to do if touch feels unsafe and consent)
Year 5 – Puberty (including menstruation/wet dreams & erections and other physical and emotional changes).
Year 6 – Conception (sexual intercourse and alternative ways of conceiving a child).

During lessons, children will have the opportunity to ask questions, but many children prefer to talk to someone at home as these can be very sensitive topics. Other subjects in school may also link to relationships education, for example learning about the life cycle of animals in Year 2.

Talking to your Child about Puberty

Don't wait for children to come to you with questions about their changing body. They might not, especially if they don't know that it's OK to ask you about this sensitive topic. Talking about puberty isn't a one-time conversation. Talk to children about the changes their bodies will go through as they grow. Some girls start puberty at 8 years old, and some boys do by 9. So you may need to start these talks earlier than you think. Discuss the physical and emotional changes that come with puberty before they begin.

This can sometimes be an awkward topic, but it is a really important one to talk about. Whilst it can feel difficult, bring up conversations with your child and take the lead – they may be worried about beginning those conversations and relived that you have. Offer lots of reassurance, normalise feelings and let them know they can ask you any questions they have. A good opportunity to talk is in the car or during a walk– it can feel less intense when you're not looking at each other.

Useful Websites

Here are some websites for further advice about talking to your child about puberty.

- Talking to Children about Puberty 1
- Talking to Children about Puberty 2
- Tampax - talking about periods
- Talking to boys about Puberty

Periods at school

Girls can often feel awkward about having cramps, discomfort and periods at school. In the junior girls' toilets there is a ladybird picture on one of the cubicles. Here, girls can access spare sanitary pads and also dispose of used products.

Some girls may feel more comfortable using 'period pants'. This is reusable underwear specially designed to absorb menstrual blood and can be worn all day without the need to change. The average age for a girl to start their period is 12, but it can be as young as 8. Older girls may like to carry pads/period underwear discreetly in their school bag in case they begin at school.

If cramps and discomfort are an issue for your child, we can administer pain-relief medication and you can request a form for this through the school office.

If your child cannot swim due to their period, a simple note to the school office or teacher saying 'no swimming today' is acceptable.

P.E & Swimming

Children can sometimes feel embarrassed about changing for P.E or swimming in front of peers. From Year 3 onwards, boys and girls change in separate areas for P.E to support them in feeling more comfortable. Boys and girls of all ages change in separate areas for swimming. Older children may feel worried about their changing bodies when getting changed (e.g. wearing a bra/crop top; worries about weight etc,). Simple measures like wearing a vest or getting changed under a large towel for swimming can help them to feel more confident. Children may also like to bring a roll-on deodorant to apply after P.E/swimming. If worries around changing remain for your child, please bring this up with their class teacher and we can offer further support or ideas.

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