



SAMARÈS SCHOOL
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Tuesday 10th December 2024

Dear Parents,

At Samarès School we are committed to working with parents and the wider community to support every child in our school. The safeguarding and welfare of all children at Samarès School is of paramount importance and it is vital that school and parents work together. Each month we send a short update around a specific welfare issue with resources to support you as parents.

Our theme for this month is **Supporting children at Christmas**.

For all the fun and festivities the Christmas holidays can bring, the holidays also represent a break in routine, which can have an effect on a child's emotional stability. Some children will struggle with the lack of structure that comes with not going to school, not getting up or going to bed early, and not having a clear sense of what each day will involve. Autistic children are particularly likely to struggle with a change in routine and are likely to experience higher levels of anxiety during this time.

Some top tips from www.youngminds.org.uk which may be helpful to alleviate the pressure of Christmas and support your child's wellbeing:

1. **Check in with your child** - Talk to your child and identify what they look forward to the most about Christmas. Find out if there's anything they are worried about or would like to do differently this year. We know that talking to your child about how they're feeling can be hard. So in the lead-up to the holidays, take time with your child to do an activity you'll both enjoy. This can create a relaxed space to start that conversation.
2. **Plan ahead** - Plan to spend time together, but - crucially - plan for each of you to have time to yourselves, whether that's through separate activities or having some unstructured down time. For children whose parents are separated, they may worry about split loyalties and may feel very anxious if asked to make a decision about which parent to spend Christmas day with. It is often really helpful for the adults concerned to make a joint decision together, relay the decision and then work on how to make those plans work for everyone.
3. **Discuss plans for time with extended family** - If you are planning to spend time with extended family, check out how your child feels about this. Think about how you can make this time the least stressful together – that could be by agreeing minimum lengths of time or where your visits and meet-ups take place.
4. **Understand their needs** - It can be hard, but understanding what each of you in the family needs is crucial to reducing stress and the risk of family arguments. Do some need more sleep than others? More space and time alone? Understanding what matters to each individual in the family, and then planning ahead, is the key to reducing anxiety.
5. **Get out of the house** - Make sure everyone gets out of the house regularly, even if it's for a brisk walk around the block. During the holidays, the sense of cabin fever and everyone being stuck indoors for a few days can cause tensions to rise.
6. **Be aware of what your child picks up on** - As parents, many of us place pressure on ourselves to make the festive period a magical time for our child. This can often come at a hefty cost, and the financial pressure of Christmas can be overwhelming. If this is something you are worried about, try to keep these conversations private and away from

your child so that they don't pick up on anxieties that adults may be experiencing. It's also important to remember that the cost of a gift is not what matters, but making family time count is what it's all about.

7. **Look after your health** - This time of year can be a time of overindulgence: lots of food, lots of late nights, lots of sugary treats. Try and get your children involved with cooking some healthy meals, or planning some more active days to bring a bit of balance to the holidays. Looking after your child this Christmas also means looking after yourself too! Ensure you are getting time to rest and time to talk about how you're doing.
8. **Do what's best for you and your family** - At this time of year, there's a lot of talk about the 'perfect Christmas'. But when it comes down to it, you know your child the best. Make decisions that suit you, even if this means doing things differently. That way you'll have a Christmas that's perfect for you and your family.

We are here to support all of our families at Samarès – please get in touch with us if there is anything you would like to discuss.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Mr Lumley
Deputy Headteacher