

MONTHLY GATESHEAD HEALTH STAFF ADVICE BULLETIN

ISSUE 18: BACK TO SCHOOL ADVICE

The sun is out, the sky is blue - going back to school may not yet be at the front of everyone's mind, however we have some helpful advice for different problems that can occur at school and in other educational settings. Being prepared for these issues will allow you to be on the front foot when September all too quickly rolls around.

In this bulletin we will look at school costs, bullying, exclusion, making complaints, discrimination in education, and disability discrimination in education. All of these issues are important to think about either for yourself, your children, family members, or friends. We can offer guidance on how to navigate through these issues and advice of extra service that you may be eligible for.

Help With School Costs

If you're on a low income, you might be able to get help with some of the costs of sending your child to school, including school meals, transport, and uniform.

- [Getting free school meals](#)

You can apply for free school meals if either:

- you get certain benefits
- you're not allowed to claim benefits because of [your immigration status](#)

You can [apply for free school meals](#) on GOV.UK. This page contains details on the scheme, eligibility and links you to the appropriate local authority website (where you apply) with your post code.

Your child will automatically get free school meals if they're in reception class or year 1 or 2.

- [Uniform](#)

The cost of school uniforms can put a strain on families financially. Several schools now offer uniform swaps through recycling schemes and allow the purchase of cheaper/unbranded uniform items. You should check with your school to see what support they offer.

There are some charities/groups in the region who supply uniform schemes:

Facebook: [Community School Clothing Scheme \(UK wide\)](#) Email: communityschoolcs@gmail.com

[Gateshead West Pre-Loved Uniform Scheme](#)

[Durham School Uniform Options](#)

[Sunderland School Uniform Support](#)

You can [find your local council on GOV.UK](#) for more uniform options

- [Transport](#)

If your child is aged 5 to 16, your local education authority (LEA) might help with free or lower cost transport if you don't live near school or your child's unable to walk there.

You can [find your LEA](#) on GOV.UK

If your child is older and in a sixth form or is an apprentice, what help they can get depends on where you live. You can [find out more about free transport for people over 16 in full-time education or training](#) on GOV.UK.

It can also be beneficial to look into the different deals your local public transport providers have. You can often find deals for children under 16 and special offers for those aged 16-18. Some transport providers will also allow for children to travel free or at a reduced rate when travelling with an adult.

[Nexus – Young people aged 18 or younger](#)

[Stagecoach – Under 19s Young Persons Bus Pass](#)

[Arriva Teen Card](#)

[Go North East - Discounts for everyone aged between 5 and 25](#)

Sorting Out School Problems

- [Bullying](#)

If your child is experiencing problems at school, it's usually best to talk to them first and then talk to their teacher. If you email or write a letter to the teacher, keep a copy. If you phone or talk face to face, make a note of the date and take notes of what you both say - at the time or straight afterwards.

A good way to approach the conversation is through following the next three points:

- explaining the problem to the teacher,
- ask what they can do to help and when,
- and ask when they'll give you an update.

Most educational institutions will have their own complaints procedure. You should ask for a copy of the school's complaints procedure if you want to raise the problem formally. You can get more advice on [dealing with bullying](#) here

- [Exclusion](#)

You can ask the headteacher to shorten or cancel the exclusion if you think it's wrong.

You can check [what a school should do when it excludes a pupil](#) on GOV.UK.

You can [find out about challenging an exclusion](#) through ACE Education. ACE is a charity that gives parents information and advice about education law.

If your child is permanently excluded, you can [contact the School Exclusion Project](#) - especially if your child has special educational needs or a disability. The School Exclusion Project offers free advice and legal help with permanent exclusions.

Remember you can get in touch with your Citizens Advice Gateshead team for impartial advice, information, and guidance.

Email gestaffswa@citizensadvicegateshead.org.uk or call 0191 490 4231 and we'll be back in touch with you within 1 working day Monday to Friday.