

Sleep, Smartphones and Learning



Why Does Sleep Matter So Much?

Sleep is not simply a period of rest. It is one of the most important times for a child's developing brain.

During sleep, the brain:

- Processes information from the day
- Strengthens memories
- Supports learning
- Regulates emotions
- Removes waste products
- Supports healthy growth and development

Children who sleep well are generally better able to concentrate, manage emotions and engage in learning.

How Smartphones Affect Sleep

Many children take smartphones, tablets or gaming devices into their bedrooms.

This can affect sleep in several ways:

Delayed Bedtimes:

Children often stay awake longer than intended when scrolling, gaming or messaging.

Increased Alertness

Exciting, emotional or stimulating content keeps the brain active when it should be preparing for sleep.

Notifications

Messages, alerts and updates can interrupt sleep throughout the night.

Blue Light

Screen light can interfere with the body's natural sleep signals, making it harder to feel tired.



Why Sleep Loss Affects Learning

When children are tired they may:

- Struggle to concentrate
- Find it harder to remember information
- Become more emotional
- Have lower motivation
- Find problem-solving more difficult

Even small reductions in sleep can affect how effectively children learn.

Signs Sleep May Be Affected

- Difficulty waking up
- Tiredness during the day
- Increased irritability
- Difficulty concentrating
- Reduced motivation
- Falling asleep in lessons

Creating Healthy Sleep Habits

The goal is not perfection. It is creating routines that give children the best chance of getting the sleep their brains need.

Practical Steps Families Can Take

- ✓ Keep smartphones and tablets out of bedrooms overnight
- ✓ Create a family charging station in a shared space
- ✓ Encourage screen-free time before bed
- ✓ Keep bedtimes and wake-up times consistent
- ✓ Avoid notifications overnight
- ✓ Talk openly about the importance of sleep
- ✓ Model healthy habits as adults

Children are far more likely to follow routines that they see adults following too.



Need Support?

Sleep difficulties are common and many families need support at some point. The good news is that small changes can often make a significant difference. If sleep is becoming a challenge for your child or family, support is available:

Speak to Your GP

If sleep difficulties are ongoing, affecting your child's wellbeing, behaviour, emotional health or daily functioning, your GP can help explore potential causes and discuss appropriate support.

Contact Ordinary Magic

Ordinary Magic provides sleep support for children, young people and families across Solihull, including access to trained sleep consultants, webinars, practical guidance and tailored support where sleep is affecting wellbeing, behaviour or learning.

Website: www.ordinarymagic.co.uk

Contact The Sleep Charity

The Sleep Charity is the UK's leading sleep organisation and provides trusted advice, resources and practical guidance for families, children and young people experiencing sleep difficulties.

Website: www.thesleepcharity.org.uk

Remember, you do not have to navigate sleep difficulties alone. Early support can make a significant difference for both children and the adults caring for them.

Key Takeaway

Before we think about improving concentration, behaviour or academic performance, it is worth asking a simple question: is my child getting enough sleep?

Sleep is one of the foundations upon which learning, wellbeing and healthy development are built. Protecting it may be one of the most important things we can do to help children thrive