

Getting it right

Perfect Peter or Horrid Henry? Is your child a perfectionist or disillusioned with school? We ask how to help.

Does your child spend hours labouring over their homework, determined to ensure it's flawless? Or are they the complete opposite and have you tearing your hair out at their couldn't-care-less attitude?

Schools are very aware of both, says Simon Kinder, deputy head at Gresham's School in Holt, but perfectionism is more likely to be an issue.

"I think it is fair to say that it is a growing trend among young people who have a real struggle to submit work because they are so obsessed with getting it absolutely right. It is a small number but it is a growing number," he says, adding that some perfectionist youngsters would rather not hand in work than risk getting negative feedback.

Simon says it's important for children to learn to take risks and understand that feeling a sense of failure now and then isn't the end of the world. The school has a culture of "first drafts", which can be particularly beneficial to perfectionists. The students are encouraged to understand that a first draft is something that can be improved and they will consider, with the teacher, what they could do differently next time.

Parents of perfectionists are encouraged to keep in close contact with school so teachers know what pressures are occurring in the child's life, and also to help parents to avoid passing on additional tension to their child.

"If a parent is anxious about a child's performing to the best of their ability that transfers to the child," he says.

The school has wellbeing groups where students learn everything from the importance of proper sleep to being a more effective worker and not burning the midnight oil.

Robin Gainher, headmaster of Beeston Hall, the prep school for seven to 13-year-olds at West Runton, says he doesn't feel the number of perfectionist children is increasing: "There are always going to be slightly exceptional children



Taking time to enjoy music and sport can help to stop a child becoming too focused on one area of their school work.



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