

# What do we mean by low mood?



Low mood can mean an absence of feeling, irritability, lack of pleasure, and/or lack of motivation. Most people have experienced this at times. However, low mood means that people feel this way persistently. Doctors define low mood as feeling this way for over two weeks.

It is not always easy to spot low mood. Signs include changes in behaviour and relationships with friends and school staff, becoming more withdrawn and fluctuating attendance. Low mood may be related to challenging home circumstances, bullying or difficult peer relationships.

## What can school staff do to support a child or young person who is experiencing low mood?



**1.** **Ask** the child or young person how they are, and let them know that how they feel matters to you.

**2.** **Express concern** but ensure they don't feel as though they are being judged for feeling this way.

**3.** **Arrange to 'check in'** with the child or young person about how they are feeling in a few days' time. As well as helping to monitor the way the child or young person is feeling, this will show that you take how they feel seriously.

**4.** Think about **which staff members** the child or young person feels the most comfortable with; they may be best placed to offer support.

**5.** **Share your concerns** with the pastoral care team. It may be appropriate to consider referring the child or young person for counselling. However, it is important not to assume that they want or need counselling. Take a lead from the child or young person as to what would be helpful for them – this may involve discussing with them the types of support that are available.