



3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020

## Goffs-Churchgate Mental Health Newsletter – Easter 2020

Dear all

I hope this Newsletter finds you in good health, both mentally and physically, at this very unusual time! We at Goffs-Churchgate appreciate just how bewildering and frustrating it must be for you all. However, it is also amazing and heart-warming to see just how much people care, and all the random acts of kindness across the country, that are bringing our communities together!

The purpose of this Newsletter is to bring you up-to-date with the mental health activities that have been going on at the school since Christmas – and there have been a lot!!

In the Christmas edition of the Newsletter I spoke about Just Talk Week, which took place in November 2019. More than 70 students submitted story boards on how to cope with exam pressure. This was a Herts wide competition and the results were announced earlier this year - our students won the only runners up prize and two highly commended prizes as well!!

In January we held our second annual 'Thirsty Thursday' event. Teas, coffees/ soft drinks, cake/ biscuits and information on mental health were given to staff and some students in exchange for a donation of £1. In total we raised over £100 which has been donated to the Samaritans. Please see the picture below taken on the day of the event.



In February, to mark Children's Mental Health Week and Time to Talk, Herts MIND hosted a stress and anxiety workshop for female students, there were form time mental health activities and we held a whole school assembly. We also designed and printed a wellbeing poster, primarily for staff, which has been displayed in numerous locations within the school. We have also shared it with Hertfordshire County Council as an example of 'good practice'.

We have paid for the licence for (Something Inside) So Strong, our school mental health anthem. We have staged two rehearsals which were attended by students, staff and parents/grandparents. Not only was it great fun but lots of people spoke about how uplifting they found it, working as a team and the simple act of singing!! The plan was to record a video on the 21st April and place it on the school website and You Tube. Due to the virus this has been postponed until further notice.

However, we are absolutely determined to record the song and make a very bold statement about our commitment to each other, as one big school community, in the fight against poor mental health!! As soon as we recommence the rehearsals we will let you know. Everyone is still very welcome to attend and take part.

There was an article in the Herts Mercury newspaper, entitled 'Academy focuses on mental health matters', dated 27/02/20, which reported on our activities in January and February!

Parents Evenings - We continue to prominently display mental health information on a notice board, place leaflets and cards on chairs for parents/carers to keep.

### Future Plans

- We have ambitions to hold family coffee mornings at the school as well as setting up parent and student surveys to capture feedback about wellbeing and mental health support within the school environment
- We would like to establish a 'Safe Space' within the school for students and staff to have access to should they require it. Initial meetings with Mr Sparks and Herts MIND have taken place to try and identify, and design, the most appropriate space. It could well be that it is initially a temporary location, prior to finding a permanent solution. This has temporarily been placed on hold
- We had arranged for Herts MIND and the Samaritans to come into school and complete presentations/workshops to Year 11's on exam stress, to parents on wellbeing and to staff on mental health. They have been postponed until school resumes
- We would like arrange a Mental Health Conference aimed at primary school Year 6 students where the topics would be transition to secondary school and stress/anxiety (we had already made tentative plans, approaching Herts MIND, the Samaritans, CHEXS, Paradise Wildlife Park and GK Icon to assist with sessions on the day). This has temporarily been placed on hold
- Planning is also well under way for the 5th annual Health and Wellbeing Day on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2020. Helen Barnett has agreed to be our key note motivational speaker talking about PTSD. Martin Griffiths and his team have also confirmed their attendance as has Tony Howarth, golf professional, who does work with secondary schools.

Taekwondo, CHEXS and other activities were also being planned. Again this event has temporarily been placed on hold

- We have held a fact finding meeting with an organisation called 'Natural Flair' run by Sharon Lawton. I spoke to her specifically about mindfulness, not only in relation to the Health and Wellbeing day but to the possibility of a longer term collaboration where mindfulness is the foundation of the school's mental health support

### Reminders!!

- If you have any concerns about health and wellbeing (your own or loved ones), or indeed any ideas as to how we could improve provision and support here at Goffs-Churchgate, please don't hesitate to contact us at our dedicated email address – [wellbeing@goffschurchgate.herts.sch.uk](mailto:wellbeing@goffschurchgate.herts.sch.uk)
- If you would like to speak to the Samaritans, you can call them free on 116 123
- If you would like to speak to Herts MIND, you can call them on 0203 727 3600 or go on line, type in 'how to contact Herts MIND' and follow the clear advice
- Also don't forget there are plenty of other mental health organisations you can contact by searching on the internet

### Messages from our Mental Health Champions

#### Sir Charles Walker KBE MP

*"All of us are aware that times are particularly difficult at the moment. But from adversity comes great opportunity. We are seeing streets and communities pull together, with acts of kindness and selflessness becoming part of everyday life.*

*The good news is that the current difficulties will pass and, when they do, we will have all learnt valuable and important lessons that we can carry with us for the rest of our lives. I am really proud of the way that we in Broxbourne are rising to the challenge that has been set up."*

#### Martin Griffiths, Trauma Surgeon at The Royal London Hospital

*"These are times filled with anxiety and fear. Where a lack of information feeds our natural concerns and a lack of structure or a clear blueprint for our expectations, let alone what is achievable render us all at the mercies of our darker thoughts.*

*What I've learned from the past few weeks can be summarised in a few observations.*

***Kindness is key. Everybody wants and needs someone to be that little bit nicer. It's surprising how far a smile or a minor act of kindness goes.***

***It's ok to be scared. Uncertainty is the only certainty right now, and we have to embrace that lack of absoluteness that we in the prosperous west take for granted, and the developing world has existed with forever. What defines us is how we choose to act when the fear is upon us, and that's a choice you can make***

***Talking about your vulnerabilities is essential. Sharing your concerns with people you trust and respect is liberating and helps hugely with gaining context***

***Positivity, positivity, positivity! Adapt use every challenge as an opportunity to find a truth about you and a better way to express and be the person you want to be***

***You get to CHOOSE how you feel. If a problem lies beyond your capacity to fix it, there is nothing to be gained by worrying about it. Fix what you can, and help those in your line of sight. There is no mileage to be gained lamenting your circumstances or complaining about menial tasks that were formerly beneath you.***

***We're all special, however nobody is more special than others. Treat everyone with respect, it's the only way.***

***I'm grateful to you for your constant messages of support and kindness.***

***Be well my friend.***

***This time will end and we'll emerge better and brighter for it. Our friends will still be there and you will know exactly what kind of person you are and what you're capable of"***

**Helen Barnett**

***Dear all***

***"I just wanted to send you a message over Easter. For us all this is a challenging time with worries and uncertainties that we don't usually encounter. This time will pass and I'm sure we will all learn from this period in our lives. Compassion, resilience and kindness are so important whilst staying safe with your family.***

***I've had an exciting few months at The Endeavour Fund Awards, public speaking and I've been made Patron of The Woodland Warrior Programme helping military and emergency service personnel who are struggling with their mental health re- cooperate, re- engage and re-calibrate in a woodland setting. All of which are temporarily on hold.***

***Sending my very best wishes to you all at Easter and always"***

***Helen.***