



Goffs-Churchgate Mental Health and Wellbeing Newsletter **Christmas 2020**

Hello everyone and welcome to the Goffs-Churchgate Mental Health and Wellbeing Newsletter for the festive period. At the time of writing our first newsletter at this time last year, we could never have known what 2020 was going to bring! One thing is for certain though, it has brought out the very best of our whole school community. The events of 2020 have brought our school community into a closer knitted school than ever before. We have achieved things we never thought possible (especially regarding your editor's computer skills!!). We wanted to make this Newsletter a celebration; to remind us of some of the great things our community of students, staff, parents and carers have achieved during this momentous year.....Here goes (and in no particular order!!).

Messages of Support

At the beginning of the lockdown, we at Goffs-Churchgate Academy asked our students, parents and carers as well as staff, to send in messages of support for one another, which we then shared with everyone. There were so many lovely messages that certainly helped to keep everyone's spirits up. This one small example came from a parent/carer:

'I would just like to say another big thank you to staff members who have taken the time out to call us checking how the boys are coping, checking if there's anything we need, and also making sure us parents are OK and coping. We have had phone calls from three teachers now and it's so nice to have that phone call of support and reassurance, it's a lovely personal touch. Thank you!'

School Mental Health Anthem

In the Easter newsletter, we spoke about having to delay the recording of the school mental health anthem – ‘Something Inside So Strong’. We also spoke about how determined we were to record the song though! Well, we DID record it. It is brilliant, genuine, and very emotive. We would just like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who took part (at whatever stage) or encouraged and supported us through home and Zoom recordings. Special thanks must go to Ms Joyce for putting together the video – thank you!

The video can be viewed at <https://www.goffschurchgate.herts.sch.uk/312/mental-health-and-wellbeing>

Creative Arts Department

A special thank you must also go to the Creative Arts department. Mr Keever and Ms Joyce were instrumental in putting together several fun competitions for the students to take part in, during the lockdown, including; ‘Movie On A Toilet Roll’, ‘Food Art Challenge’, and ‘Happy Hands’!

(Picture: Food art challenge entry from Alex Keefe, Yr 7)



Watford FC Mental Health Workshop

The Year 7 students enthusiastically engaged in Watford Football Club’s Mental Health Workshops for six weeks during the Summer Term. The quality of their work was consistently outstanding. Their engagement and participation with the workshop were excellent and the students were a credit to themselves, their families, and the school. Taylor Morrison, who works for Watford FC said: ‘Based on the large number of worksheets you have sent me so far (so much more than other schools) we have been very pleased with Goffs-Churchgate’s efforts, so thank you for that!’

Virtual Health and Wellbeing Day

On Friday 10th July 2020, we hosted our 5th Annual Health and Wellbeing Day. We felt it was more important than ever to take part, as mental health and wellbeing have really come to the forefront nationally during the pandemic. We had pre-recorded videos, including an opening speech from one of our Mental Health Champions, Sir Charles Walker MP, a NSPCC Assembly featuring Ant and Dec, mental health videos featuring Prince William, Arsenal and Tottenham. We also held live sessions with the British Red Cross, Natural Flair Coaching (managing worries and developing a positive mindset), quizzes with Ian Biggadike from GK Icon, and two Herts MIND Webinars.

Erin Pipe-Crouch receives the first Annual Mental Health Poetry Competition Cup



World Mental Health Day on Saturday 10th October 2020

In the week leading up to World Mental Health Day, Goffs-Churchgate Academy engaged students, parents and staff in a series of sessions regarding mental health and wellbeing. The week started with the whole of Year 7 attending workshops on the '5 Ways to Wellbeing', which were hosted by our partners from Herts MIND Network. Our students engaged enthusiastically and thoughtfully. Their ideas and drawings formed part of a display in the school.

On Wednesday 8th October 2020, there was a non-uniform day at the school to raise money for Herts MIND. Students, staff and parents raised £531.47! Each year group then watched a short video by one of our Mental Health Champions, Helen Barnett. Helen lives with PTSD, having been seriously injured in several incidents whilst serving in the Metropolitan Police. She spoke about stress, anxiety and about recently climbing a mountain in Wales. The students also took part in a mental health quiz.

Towards the end of the week, all students watched a short video from Sir Charles Walker MP, another of our Mental Health Champions, as well as watching and discussing PowerPoint presentations about the '5 Ways to Wellbeing' and 'Stress and Anxiety'.

Virtual Wellbeing Coffee Mornings for Parents/Carers

We also hosted our first virtual wellbeing coffee mornings with parents/carers. They have been great meetings, with plenty to chat about and discuss. Due to the success, we have agreed to hold the coffee mornings every month. They are an opportunity to chat informally, meet new friends and discuss mental health and wellbeing, or any other topic that you wish.

We would love more of you to join us! If you would like to 'virtually attend' one of our coffee mornings, please do not hesitate to contact me at:
wellbeing@goffschurchgate.herts.sch.uk

Mental Health Champions

In November, we marked 'Just Talk' week by sending our champions a 'thank you' card each. Sir Charles Walker MP and Helen Barnett were pleased to receive their cards. Martin Griffiths, a trauma surgeon, replied saying: *'I'm absolutely thrilled to receive such thoughtful feedback from staff and students. It's a joy and privilege to work with you and I look forward to expanding on the great progress we've made'*.

Natural Flair Coaching Mindfulness Sessions for Staff

Staff have now attended two Mindfulness sessions at school. Our host, Sarah, from Natural Flair Coaching took us through some basic techniques for Mindfulness before we went into a body mapping exercise. The staff have really enjoyed the events and are already looking forward to the next session, which takes place in January.



Support

The festive period can be a very stressful time for us all. Many organisations provide mental health and wellbeing support. Please don't hesitate to go online to see what services are available.

You can call Herts MIND on 01923 256 391 to access their NightLight service, for example. The service is a countywide, out of hour's mental health crisis service, providing a safe and welcoming space, for people who are feeling distressed and experiencing a crisis. They are open out of hours on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and Monday nights from 7 pm-2 am, every week of the year.

You can also contact the Samaritans on 116 123, free at any time of day or night for confidential support and advice.

Looking ahead

We have so many things in the pipeline including student, staff and parent/carer wellbeing surveys, which we will be posting out to everyone in January 2021. We will also start to decorate and access furniture for the student 'safe area'; an area where students can go if they are experiencing mental health or wellbeing concerns. We have a variety of events including, 'Thirsty Thursday', which takes place on the 3rd Thursday in January making refreshments for staff, in return for a donation to the Samaritans. 'Feeling Good Week' takes place in February and we will start preparations for our 6th Annual Health and Wellbeing Day in July. We have also started recording a series of Podcast interviews with organisations and individuals, discussing mental health and wellbeing. We will start to post them on our school YouTube channel as soon as we can.

Our theme for the Spring Term is 'Hope'. As we leave 2020 behind us and go into the New Year, with a vaccination being rolled out, daylight hours getting longer, and a return to 'normality' seemingly more likely, we can dare to hope!

On behalf of all the Goffs-Churchgate community, I would like to take this opportunity of wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy 2021.

Jim Clune, Mental Health Lead