



15th November 2018

Dear Parents and Carers,

On Monday 12th November the government updated a document called '*Guidance on Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools*'.

The full document can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools-2>

We take this aspect of our work very seriously. Although not exhaustive, the following give a flavour of how we support the mental health and wellbeing of pupils and staff:

- The document recognises schools are not experts in this field. Liaison with other professionals and agencies is the most proactive way forward. We work closely with services such as the school nurse, GPs, counsellors, CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service), and *Strong Young Minds*. We are also supported by both Herefordshire and Gloucestershire local authorities.
- We always work closely with parents and carers.
- In summer's *Prospect*, we consulted on changes to our school development plan. We have 10 target areas including *Happy, Healthy, Successful Students* and *Happy, Healthy, Successful Staff*.
- To support these targets, we have six staff wellbeing ambassadors. They are receiving training in listening skills, empathy, and managing workload. Some of these issues will be appropriate to our work with young people.
- During the spring term one of our pupils made a presentation to trustees on mental health awareness and work done in school to support pupils. We have pupil representation on Herefordshire's Wellbeing Ambassador Group and hosted a visit in the summer term.
- Cameron Wood, an active member of Herefordshire's Youth Parliament, is a frequent visitor to assemblies and classes. My staff attend meetings to support this programme.
- All pupils are actively encouraged to participate in school events and extra-curricular activities, including sport, music and drama.
- Our school restaurant, run by Alliance in Partnership, has a focus upon healthy eating. Feedback from our school council on the quality of food is always very positive.
- You may have seen in the local press that, as with many schools, we formally recognised National Mental Health Week. This involved assemblies, lessons and workshops looking at mental illness, mental wellness and resilience.

Ultimately, one of the strengths of this school is that we know our students really well. As Ofsted pointed out in our last inspection, safeguarding processes are meticulous.

I will shortly have a meeting with Amanda Spielman, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector. We will discuss plans for the new Ofsted inspection framework. As head of Ofsted, Ms Spielman has rightly said the focus of



schools must be upon providing wide opportunities for pupils to have memorable experiences, make friends, study a wide range of subjects and to achieve their potential. She could, of course, have said *Happy, Healthy, Successful*, but that term is taken!

I have experience of leading this school for almost 20 years. Moreover, I have had the privilege of visiting hundreds of schools in my work as an Ofsted Inspector and National Leader of Education. I know that successful schools strike the right balance. An ambition for good outcomes to improve life chances for young people is matched with support. We ensure pupils and parents keep everything in perspective. So called 'hot housing' and excessive pressure to get good results simply doesn't work.

None of this means we get everything right every time. Should you have any concerns or suggestions about how we operate in this capacity please let us know. As I said in the summer edition of *Prospect*, come and tell me your thoughts, even if you think I won't like them. I wrote, 'If you are right, I guarantee I'll fix it. If you are wrong, I'll convince you over a coffee.' Nobody took me up on this, but my offer remains. Of course, if you have specific concerns about your son or daughter please contact their form teacher or head of year. We will offer all necessary support.

We are gearing up for a busy time. We have a panto, a Christmas concert, and our sixth form Christmas dinner. There are so many students wishing to attend the latter that we have had to book Gloucester rugby ground – not the pitch, the indoor bit! Please refer to our website, texts, parent/carers emails and the press for details. I hope to see you at one or more of our events.

Best wishes,

Nigel Griffiths