

Mental Health Awareness

This week in form time and assemblies we have focussed on Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing. Students have been reminded in Mrs Knight's assemblies of how, when and where they can access support, both through school and externally. We have also reminded them of some of the activities and routines that help to maintain emotional wellbeing: healthy diet, regular exercise, sensible balance between school work and relaxation, a good night's sleep and so on. One of the things that still surprises and concerns me is the number of students I speak to who have their phones/tablets in their rooms with them at night. We do see the impact of this in school (with a small number of students) who are regularly tired and find it more difficult to concentrate because of the disrupted sleep and screen-time activity through the night. As a parent I am all too familiar with the difficulty of encouraging teens to adopt sensible habits with their phone use, but ultimately, I think it's up to us to find the right balance between compromise (can sometimes feel like bribery!), rewards and sanctions if they are not sticking to the agreed arrangements.

In line with mental health week, we have also had a celebration assembly for our 31 Bronze Duke of Edinburgh students who received their badges and certificates this week. What better way to promote positive mental health than to be involved in a scheme like this that encourages team work, being outdoors, learning new skills, self-confidence etc? And on this topic, I should also add a separate well done to Daniel Hutchinson, Fergus Latta and Dan Crisp (former student) who completed their Silver D of E over the summer with Explorer Scouts (they were part of the group who worked with Laura Wilson – mentioned in last week's email, and completed their final expedition using canoes on West Yorkshire canals). Daniel also achieved his chief scout platinum award in September, a rare accolade for someone his age.

Staff vs Students Rugby

Perhaps the highlight of our mental health focus this week was the staff vs Yr 11 rugby match at lunch time today. Driving rain this morning, followed by a howling wind led to some treacherous conditions...but these were the least of the worries for the students. The Year 11s came into the match knowing that their predecessors last year had experienced two bruising and indeed humiliating defeats in the netball and football fixtures against a seemingly ever-green staff. Pace, power, and purpose have been the bedrock of the staff's recent sporting accomplishments, so an eager crowd gathered in anticipation of a feast of sporting finery. What could our Yr 11s do to breakdown this resistance, to stifle this creative power borne from years of experience?

Well, quite a lot as it happens. Let me not bore the readers with dull statistics and scorelines...suffice to say that the students fought hard (and mostly fairly) to win a well-deserved victory. Actually I lost count of how many tries they scored. Turns out that our staff have lost a bit of pace over the summer. The match was played in great spirit, but on reflection, perhaps the staff should have prayed for a divine typhoon intervention?

Note to self: before the next staff vs student match, perhaps adopt a less self-assured and cocky approach in assembly the day before. Lesson learned...we will be back, leaner, fitter, faster and stronger for the next encounter. Or maybe we'll just be back and leave it at that!

Thankyou to the students and staff for participating – it was great fun, and I was impressed with the levels of organisation that went into the event from the student organisers.

Year 8 History Trip

Ms Haydon writes: Today Yr 8 students returned from an amazing trip to the World War One Battlefields in Belgium and France. The high point was all students attending the memorial ceremony at the Menin Gate where two Bedale High School students laid a wreath to honour the fallen in World War One. Thank you to the parents who allowed them to participate in the trip and the staff who supported it.

Good Luck to Mrs Lumsdon/Welcome to Mr Parnell

Today was Mrs Lumsdon's last day before she goes on her maternity leave. We wish her all the best and look forward to seeing the baby pics! We also welcome Adam Parnell as the replacement Music teacher. Mr Parnell will be taking on Mrs Lumsdon's classes during her maternity leave and we have been fortunate to be able to appoint someone with such extensive experience. He has had some time with Mrs Lumsdon this week to ensure that the handover is smooth, and that he is fully up to speed.

Faculty Deep Dive

This week Mr Gill and I have spent most of the week working with Performing Arts, PE, Music, Art and Textiles as we carried out our first faculty 'deep dive' of the year. We will be doing this with all faculties as we move through the year. The idea behind it is simple – when I spoke to staff at the start of the year about our core values of courage, commitment compassion, I said that for me, this is about how willing we are to look at our own practice, and to have the bravery to accept that there will always be areas we can improve. In the very busy weeks of term time, it's a real challenge to stop and take time to look at what we teach, why/how we teach it, how we plan it and so on. This week has been a really valuable experience and the next steps will be part of our plans moving forward. I would like to thank the staff for responding so positively, but also the students, - we have done a lot of student voice this week and as always, it has been honest, constructive and incredibly positive.

Restart A Heart Day

Parents may remember that last year Mr Childe organised for us to participate in this event and it was a massive success. Next Wednesday we will be doing the same again, with 122 students from across all year groups taking part in activities relating to cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and defibrillator use or first aid surrounding heart attacks. Raising awareness around what to do in the event of a heart attack is something that we want to support, and the event was run so well last year that we wanted to be involved again. Keep an eye out on Facebook for pictures and further information.

Open Evening 2

We are aware that a number of Yr 5 and 6 parents were unable to make our original Open Evening last week and will be arranging a back-up event for Thursday 24th October at 3.30pm. If you know any parents in this situation, please do pass on the information. It will be an opportunity to speak with me, Miss Bradbury, some students and then to have a tour of the school.

Summer Exam Results...Just got even better!

Parents may or may not be aware of the way that schools are accredited with a score based on the academic performance of students at GCSE. This is called the Progress 8 (or P8) Score. It is designed to measure how students perform on average, across 8 key subject areas, when compared to other students of similar ability across the country. To put it simply, any score that is positive means that the school's students are doing better than average. In inclusive state comprehensive schools like ours, it can be a real challenge to achieve a positive score, but we are really proud that last year's good score of +0.02 has been improved upon by our most recent results. The final score is not yet validated but we currently sit on a P8 score of +0.14. This reflects our ongoing improvement over recent years, as well as a lot of hard work from parents, students and staff...something for us all to be proud of.

Drug Awareness Evening

A reminder that on Monday 14th October we are holding a Parents Drug Awareness evening from 6.30pm – 8pm. Topics will include: Drugs and the Law; How to talk to your children about drugs; The Local picture and where you can access further information and support. Please e-mail or ring school if you are planning to attend.

Attachment – GCSE Year 11 Geography Field Trip to Leeds

