



WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

13th May 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

Over the last decade, the importance of maintaining good mental as well as physical health has become more widely known and accepted. I am acutely aware that the coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated many teenagers' feelings of loneliness, anger and anxiety. We have found girls expressing more concern for themselves and their friends, and quite often they are unable to articulate why they have these feelings. The dilemma is that often, the more we help, the less able they become to help themselves, which makes me think of the famous proverb:

Give a person a fish, they will eat for a day. Teach a person to fish, they will eat for a lifetime.

Our aim is to give the girls the tools to sustain good mental health throughout their lives, to allow them to find a way to keep themselves well and when this is not possible, to ask for help.

We have been raising awareness, confronting prejudice and providing support for all individuals and groups. We are currently celebrating Mental Health Awareness Week, emphasising the importance of active engagement by each girl. If there is one message we would like your daughters to hear, understand and act upon, is that good mental health requires action; it is not something that can happen through inaction and we all need to learn to become more proactive.

A key feature of our provision is signposting girls to places where they can seek advice, support or information and a lot of this can be found on our [website](#). Miss Pooley's powerful and personal assembly outlined the importance of understanding when you need help and then actively seeking support. Bespoke assemblies have also been devised by Sneha, our Mental Health Practitioner and girls have been trying out art therapy with the use of Zentangles (do ask your daughter). Meanwhile a group of Year 12 girls are undergoing training as Just Talk Ambassadors, to go alongside our Peer Education Project, in which Year 12 girls deliver a course on mental health to the Year 7, in a course designed by the Mental Health Foundation. For those who do need support with their mental health, we have strengthened our counselling team.

The girls themselves are very aware of the need to invest in mental health systems. Their work to raise money for charity has benefited local providers such as Signpost and you can read a letter from Depression UK at the end of this newsletter about the money raised by Year 7 girls. As well as volunteering to act as ambassadors and mentors, the girls are always challenging themselves to do more, to learn more and to help more. The impact of the pandemic, unfettered use of social media and the stresses of living in today's society mean that as a school we will never be complacent because we know that we need to always work to prepare our girls for their lives in and beyond WGGs.

Face Coverings

Based on the updated guidance from the DfE we will be changing our policy on face coverings from Monday 17th May. I have updated the policy on the school website but in summary:

- Pupils may voluntarily wear a face covering in school
- Staff and visitors will be required to wear a face covering in communal areas when social distancing cannot be maintained.

Parent Survey

An important part of our school development is based on the feedback we receive from pupil, staff and parent surveys. We missed out on this last year, but we have reintroduced this now. Please do take 5 minutes to complete the survey below; it really does mean that we can respond to your voice:

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=TB_FoE7fSEaBU6Ls4yHOSx675inFTgtJnmJsmHohjcRUNVpWNTZEVOUwN1RVOEFYMjFERDRYNEfpXVS4u

Letter sent by Depression UK

It is no secret that small national charities, like our own, rely upon the generosity and spirit of those who are willing to donate. All and any donations are, not only welcomed, but celebrated. Depression UK would like to pay special thanks to the Year 7s at Watford Grammar School for Girls, who have demonstrated an abundance of both generosity and spirit (not to mention hard work!).

During this Autumn and Winter term, the Year 7 team have worked tirelessly to organise fundraising events outside of their normal curriculum. For example, they organised both a Halloween Party and a Sponsored Silence. The funds raised from these events was then to be given to a democratically selected cause. We are incredibly honoured and humbled to report that the total sum donated to us was £3,973.83.

Anjali Rao, a Charity Rep for Year 7, reached out to us to let us know more about the work that they'd been doing:

"We chose Depression UK to be our charity because of the increase in depression happening around the world due to COVID-19. We felt that this was an important cause. Examples of events we have done to raise money are a Halloween party and a Sponsored Silence. As a future event we are planning a quiz night. We felt it was important to help support this charity, as often people don't feel they have a voice, but Depression UK can help them."

The funds are incredibly important to us – as previously mentioned, we rely upon the generosity of our supporters, particularly after removing charges to our membership. But these funds will go even further during lockdown, where we have decided to postpone any renewal fees of existing members, so that they can still access all of our services absolutely free of charge, throughout lockdown when they are perhaps most needed. It has to be stated that work like this would not have been possible without the compassion demonstrated by the Year 7s.

The money is, of course, incredibly important to us and the work that we do. But the work of the Year 7s at Watford Grammar School for Girls represented something bigger than that. For one, it shows the power that groups have when they work together to strive for a common goal. It wouldn't have been possible to raise such a generous amount of money without teamwork. But on the flip side, the combined power of a group is only capable with the isolated action of the constituent individuals of that group. In this sense, the students have encapsulated their school mantra; I can do it, I will do it.

Similarly, the money raised represents a beacon of hope for mental health. The money raised is worthy of celebration in of itself, but the source of the charity is doubly interesting. These Year 7s have shown that the young generation get the importance of mental health; they're willing to talk about it openly and willing to give it a priority in their social circles. I am hopeful that as this generation continues to mature, this proclivity to supporting mental health will convert into legislation or at least into social norms that will erode the biases and stigmas that exist at the moment. These girls have done their schools, parents and selves proud by using their education to serve their community.

Enormous thanks to all of the parents, teachers and Year 7 students at Watford Grammar School for Girls, with special thanks to Deputy Head of Year, Mrs Smith.

Best wishes,

Sylvia Tai