

Mindfulness Monthly

Issue 05: April 2024

Welcome to April's 'Mindfulness Monthly'. In this edition we will share more tips for positive self-care, as well as give more of an insight into how we are supporting students with their mental health needs. We will also learn more about some members of the Thamesmead staff and what they do to support their mental health.

Mental Health and Well-Being Support Experts

Following on from our look at the colleagues that come into school to provide mental health support for our students, we're going to learn about two more members of the team;



The Mental Health Support Team (MHST) offer a school-based service which supports the mental health of children and young people in schools across Surrey. They offer support and advice around the child or young person to enable them to identify any concerns, understand what has happened for that child or young person and support any developing mental health needs.

How long have you been working in the mental health team?

I have worked as an Educational Psychologist with the mental health team since October 2022.

How many days a week are you based at Thamesmead?

I am not based at Thamesmead but work in lots of different schools across three areas of Surrey. I am looking forward to visiting Thamesmead again soon.

What are the best parts of your work?

I really enjoy getting to know schools over time and supporting them to make their school a better place to be for everyone.

What do you do to support with your own mental health?

I like being outside, going for walks and reading whenever I can.

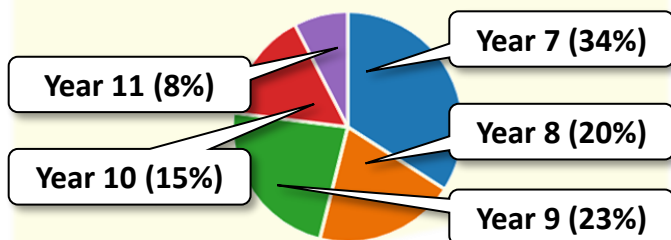


Rebecca Walker

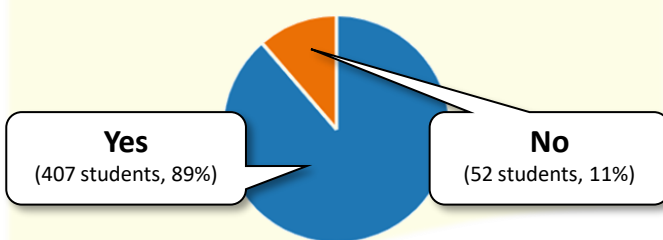
'Time To Talk Day' Survey

In order to celebrate 'Time To Talk Day' on Thursday 1st February, we gave students the opportunity to talk about how well they think Thamesmead is doing when it comes to supporting their mental health. The feedback the students gave was really helpful, with the key messages being shared below;

In total, 467 students completed the survey



Do you have a trusted adult that you can talk to?



'Time To Talk Day' Survey Continued...

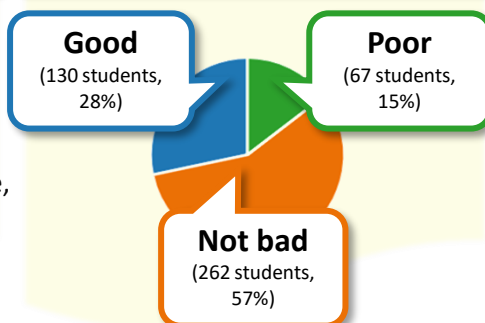
How comfortable are you talking about your mental health?



9% of students feel very comfortable, 32% are quite comfortable, 15% are quite uncomfortable and 7% are very uncomfortable

177 students, 38% were neutral

How would you describe Thamesmead's support for your mental health?



What activities do you do that make you feel calm and relaxed?

21% of students stated 'football', 18% answered 'hanging out with friends', 11% said 'playing computer or video games', and 6% said 'listening to music'. Other answers were given, but these were the top answers.

On a scale of one to ten (with 10 being brilliant and 1 being poor), how would you rate your mental health?

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 student (0.21% of the survey) rated themselves as a '0' | 44 students (9%) scored themselves a '6' |
| 5 students (1% of students) rated themselves a '1' | 77 students (16%) scored themselves as a '7' |
| 7 students (1.49%) gave themselves a '2' | 100 (21%) scored themselves as an '8' |
| 12 (2.5%) scored their mental health a '3' | 73 students (15%) scored themselves as '9' |
| 45 (9%) scored themselves a rating of '4' | 48 (10%) scored themselves as '10' |
| 42 (8%) scored themselves a '5' | |

13 students didn't answer this question or scored themselves as something different

When asked what Thamesmead could do better to support mental health, suggestions included 'not having as many detentions', 'issue less home learning', 'mental health days', 'weekly/monthly check-ins with students', 'have more Personal Development lessons about mental health' and 'have a mental health club'. Many students also wanted Fridays off! In order to tackle these points (and address the concerns of the 67 students who felt our mental health provision was poor), we have already begun to look at how our current Well-Being Hub can be used by more students, and started work on adding more mental health lessons to the Personal Development provision for next year. 65% of students also thought it would be useful to set up Student Mental Health Ambassadors within school, with 79% of students expressing an interest in taking on the role, so this is absolutely something that we will roll-out moving forward.

Positive Mental Health Top Tips: Spending Time Outside

Following on from last month's tip about the importance of sleep, we move on to the next top tip for positive self-care; spending time in the great outdoors! Research regularly shows the positive impact that spending time outdoors can have on our mental health. The many benefits include;

- **Stress Reduction:** Whether it's the gentle rustle of leaves or the soothing sounds of flowing water, natural environments have a calming effect that help to alleviate tension, reduce stress levels and promote relaxation.
- **Improved Mood:** Exposure to nature is associated with enhanced mood and emotional well-being. The sights, sounds, and smells of the outdoors can evoke feelings of joy and contentment.
- **Enhanced Cognitive Function:** Time spent in nature has been shown to improve cognitive function, including attention, memory, and creativity.
- **Increased Physical Activity:** Outdoor activities such as cycling or simply taking a walk in the park provide opportunities for physical exercise, which is known to have numerous benefits for mental health. Regular physical activity releases endorphins, neurotransmitters that act as natural mood lifters, reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression.

BENEFITS OF GETTING OUTSIDE

- BOOSTS ENERGY
- MAKES EXERCISING EASIER
- MENTAL HEALTH REMEDY
- VITAMIN D
- RESTORES FOCUS
- BOOSTS IMMUNE SYSTEM
- ENHANCES CREATIVITY
- IMPROVES SLEEP QUALITY
- AIDS IN GRACEFUL AGING
- IMPROVES VISION

TIME SPENT AMONGST TREES IS NEVER WASTED TIME.

- Katrina Mayer

Spending time outside can be a real boost, whether it's going for a walk or simply sitting under a tree and soaking in the sights and sounds of nature. So, the next time you're feeling overwhelmed or stressed, consider stepping outside and allowing nature to work its magic.

Supporting 'Young Carers'

'A young carer is someone who is under 18 years old and looks after a family member who is ill, disabled, battling addiction, or has a mental health condition. Some children begin giving care from a very young age, and others becoming carers overnight. Research shows that as many as one in five children and young people are young carers. In England and Wales, the latest census data reveals that there are around 166,000 young carers. These figures do not represent all young carers. In England alone, it's estimated that there are an additional 600,000 hidden young carers not receiving any support. As a result of this it is important that we identify who the Young Carers are in school and offer support where necessary.'

The responsibility of a young carer is wide and varied. It can include practical tasks (such as cooking, housework and shopping), physical care (such as helping someone out of bed), emotional support (such as talking to someone who is distressed), personal care (such as helping someone dress), helping to give medicine, helping someone communicate, or looking after brothers and sisters.

Caring for someone can be very isolating, worrying and stressful. For young carers, this can negatively impact their experience in education. Over a quarter of young carers aged 11-15 regularly miss school. This can have a lasting effect on their life chances. One in three young carers said that their caring role makes them feel stressed.'

To support our Young Carers at Thamesmead, Mrs Taliana-Carey (our Young Carer Lead) has set up a Teams page for students where they can receive guidance, support and notifications of any events that will be held in school. In addition to this, you may wish to consider signing up for Surrey Action for Young Carers where further support can be obtained. Surrey Action for Young Carers also have a diary of events and activities that students can participate in. You can sign up by emailing syc@actionforcarers.org.uk (or calling 0303 040 1234), or by letting Mrs Taliana-Carey know.

The information used in this article has been taken from the 'Action For Children' website. For more information regarding Young Carers, the organisations shown opposite have very useful websites where you can find out more.



The 'Mindworks' website

Over the last few editions of Mindfulness Monthly we have flagged the amazing work of the Mindworks MHST. As well as having a team of experts visiting schools in order to work one-to-one with students, they have also set up an incredibly useful website than can be accessed by everyone. The website, hyperlinked opposite, offers support for young people and parents, and is an invaluable resource if you have questions or want to further support your children. An example of what can be found on the parent page can be seen below;



This site can be used during the Easter holidays should you need to advice or support whilst school is closed.

Thamesmead Staff Profiles

As with the last edition, this month we will once again learn about Thamesmead staff and what they do to support their mental health;

What is your role at Thamesmead?

I am an Assistant Headteacher and the Designated Safeguarding Lead in school.

How long have you worked at Thamesmead?

I have been at Thamesmead for six years.

Have you had other careers prior to working at Thamesmead?

I have - mainly holiday and hospitality. I have worked overseas as a Holiday Rep, an Area Supervisor and Area Manager for Eurocamp, and I have worked in London for travel companies and been a Ski Holiday Rep and Hotel Reservations Coordinator.

What do you do to support with your own mental health?

There are lots of things I do. I enjoy sports (mainly football and taekwondo – I'm going for my black belt in the summer!), spend time with my family, and make sure I get away and do something different (such as weekends with friends, holidays with family). I also try to have a goal that I really want to achieve. Other ways I relax are by watching my favourite shows on TV, walking the dog through the woods, treating myself to culinary delights (such as pizza on Fridays) and falling asleep on the sofa!



Mr North



Miss Fisher

What is your role at Thamesmead?

I am an English teacher and also Head of Year 8.

How long have you worked at Thamesmead?

This is my fifth year at Thamesmead.

Have you had other careers prior to working at Thamesmead?

I've taught in Manchester and Perth, and before teaching I was a disability support worker.

What do you do to support with your own mental health?

To support my mental well-being I play football, go running, do jigsaws and spend time with my partner and friends.



The work of TJ Power

Thamesmead have recently been made aware of the work of a neuroscientist called TJ Power, who takes an interesting and effective approach when it comes to dealing with mental health. Whilst we are all aware that poor mental health can lead to negative feelings such as being worried, stressed, anxious and angry (to name a few), TJ looks at positive things that you can do in order to increase the four positive chemicals in your brain which in turn make us feel better. TJ has developed the 'DOSE' strategy, where he looks at how to increase your Dopamine, Oxytocin, Serotonin and Endorphins, all of which improve your mental health (**Dopamine** is responsible for motivation; **Oxytocin** is responsible for connection; **Serotonin** is responsible for your mood; **Endorphins** are responsible for reducing your stress levels). By increasing these, we feel better in ourselves.

We will share more information about TJ Power and the DOSE strategy in upcoming editions.

Well-Being Quote:

"Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud"

Maya Angelou

Try to be
a rainbow
in someone
else's cloud.