



Meadowbrook Family Comms

Summer Term

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Head Teacher's Message

It was with great interest this week that I read an article by Michael Burke (founder of Embrace Resilience) in the most recent copy of *'The Independent Schools Magazine'* (April 2022). When questioning if there is a mental health crisis in schools, Michael states "The problem arises when people who say 'Let's talk about mental health' talk about mental illness instead".

I found myself nodding and shaking my head enthusiastically in response to certain comments as I read his article. This train of thought so accurately reflected my own, I felt compelled to talk about it. Why is it increasingly more common to default to talking about mental illness with our young people rather than mental health? Why are words like stress, anxiety, disorder, fragility and sensitivity seemingly more prevalent in current conversation about mental health than words like resilient, bold, courageous and strong?

The obvious answer is that there are simply many more

cases of families and young people reaching out for support for mental health issues. The alarming trend is quite rightly highlighted and children should of course know that genuine mental health issues exist and that they can be extremely serious and life-changing. They should know that people that find themselves experiencing and living with mental health challenges are entitled to the right support and help.

Children may also experience mental health illness through a parent, carer or sibling and they need to know that they can talk about such matters to a trusted adult and ask for help if they need it. It is essential, therefore, that we talk to children about mental illness. One of our roles is undoubtedly to help them recognize when they might need help, and to provide interventions and support if needed.

A genuine concern arises though if successful teaching of mental health in schools is measured by the volume of assemblies or lessons delivered on anxiety or worry, or by the identification of mental

health illness trends in schools that initiate more lessons and interventions about 'getting help'. Most children, particularly at the primary school level, do not need to know about mental health illness in great depth, and talking about it too much can in itself create unnecessary worry and concern. It can also create a sense of dependency on help. We do not want our children to feel that ALL emotional reactions are a sign of mental stress for which they need help. What **are** we teaching our children if the focus is on help rather than resilience?

In reality, both health and illness should be addressed as part of a well-rounded and robust curriculum, just as it would when talking about the physical body. At Meadowbrook, we teach children that everyday emotional reactions, both the good and the bad, are inherently experienced in life and that managing such reactions is a skill that grows through experience. We want children, therefore, to experience a whole heap of uncomfortable, awkward, difficult situations so they have plenty of practise while

they are with us! We want them to learn about their strengths and weaknesses, their doubts and fears, their ambitions and aspirations, and to embrace all parts of themselves. In order to do so, they must experience the vast range of human emotions and reactions, and teachers and parents should be allowing them opportunities to do so.

We need to be clear ourselves though on the difference between an everyday reaction to a negative emotion or experience (disappointment, anger, sadness, tiredness, embarrassment, confusion, loss) and a mental health concern. If we do not know the difference, we cannot teach our children about it, and we could be sending the wrong message to children about what it looks and feels like to experience and manage a range of 'normal and rational' emotional responses.

Children should also understand that they cannot always change situations they find uncomfortable or difficult, but they can still remain in control. This may include asking for help, but

the focus should be on empowerment, rather than disempowerment; it should be on strength, rather than on weakness. Creating resilient, well-rounded, informed children, equipped with a range of strategies and experiences that prepare them for life in the wider world is such an important aim at Meadowbrook, that we spend a great deal of time developing it! Our aspiration is that every child leaves Meadowbrook mentally healthy.

If you, parents or children, have any comments or questions about mental health and illness, or how we teach it in school, please do be in touch. I'd love to know what your opinion is!

[Queen's Green Canopy Tree-Planting Ceremony.](#)

Thank you to everyone that volunteered to represent our school for this unique and very special ceremony, which is taking place in Windsor on Tuesday, 10th May. A name-drawing assembly was held on Thursday for the volunteers, and the winner was....**Isabelle Fowler, Y3!**

Thank you Isabelle! You'll need to take some amazing pictures for our school scrapbook please!

Year 3&4 had an extraordinary day at Ufton Court on Tuesday. Sarah Jane says 'They took part in a variety of activities and looked at and discussed an array of artefacts, and learnt some new (old!) Viking words for objects and games. One of their favourite activities was when they pretended to be Viking Voyagers and raided different lands for their riches.

It was a day jam-packed with fun, laughter, singing, games and learning'.



Year 5&6 have also been rather busy, both in the classroom and out! It's so nice to see some of the different things you are doing this term.



weeded, classified what a weed is, watered the allotment and used magnifying glasses for a bug hunt. More bug classification will be explored next week.

Fingers crossed, we will be selling our harvesting and selling our produce before the summer holidays!

Julie Miles, Y5&6 teacher



In Outdoor Club this week, we sowed green beans and carrots, and re-potted sunflower seedlings. Collectively we

Diary Dates

Bank Holiday

Monday, 2nd May

Year 5&6 Ure Museum Trip

Tuesday, 10th May

Afternoon trip, lunch at school.

School Photos

Wednesday, 18th May

Class and Graduate photos

Platinum Jubilee

Celebration

Friday 27th May

50s themed picnic and fete

Sarah

headteacher@meadowbrook.uk