

WAMHS Newsletter

Dear Parents and Carers, we hope this first newsletter of 2020/21 finds you all well. In what has been a hugely challenging time throughout the world with the murder of George Floyd, COVID-19 and ongoing changes to the way we all live and work, we hope that you are all finding time to take good care of yourselves. We have been working harder than ever to support the wellbeing and mental health of every child at SJSJ and we would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of the ways in which we will be supporting your child(ren) this academic year. It is our hope that you might find some of these ideas helpful to introduce at home too.

Strengthening Wellbeing

Children have faced an extensive period of disruption this year. While we can't predict what the long term impact of Covid-19 will be, previous research on the effects of quarantine have led some researchers to voice concerns about children's wellbeing and mental health.¹

This year, more than ever, our children will need emotional support from adults in their lives, as well as support to understand and manage their own emotions. We hope that the skills the children at SJSJ learn this year will help them to stay happy and well in the future.

Supporting Each Other

"We all know that Hackney is special. It's a place where we celebrate diversity and people from different perspectives and backgrounds get along with each other... We need to remember that we are all living very different versions of lockdown, and our experiences and challenges vary wildly. We need to show each other respect, be understanding of each others circumstances..."

Philip Glanville, Mayor of Hackney

Wellbeing Ambassadors

This year, we have introduced Wellbeing Ambassadors who will help us to improve mental health and wellbeing for all children at SJSJ.

Child Wellbeing Ambassadors

Yr 1 – Lucia and Rupert	Yr 2 – Abraham and Lily
Yr 3 – Blessing and Ryan O	Yr 4 – Anna and Suraya
Yr 5 – Ziqi and Anton	Yr 6 – Eloise and Dylan

Staff Wellbeing Ambassadors - Mr Watson & Ms Eames

Get involved - We are looking for parents to join our team of Wellbeing Ambassadors. If you are interested, please contact Mrs Adamsdale for more information.

Zones of Regulation

Feelings are a bit like the contents of a pressure cooker, if we don't release them gently overtime, they can boil over and overwhelm us. With this in mind, we have been encouraging children at SJSJ to "check-in" with their feelings daily using the Zones of Regulation.

Blue zone – I'm feeling sad, sick, tired, bored, moving slowly

Green zone – I'm feeling happy, calm, feeling okay, focused, ready to learn

Yellow Zone – I'm feeling frustrated, worried, silly/wiggly, excited, loss of some control

Red zone – I'm feeling mad/angry, terrified, yelling/hitting, elated, out of control

Get creative with supporting your child to "check in"... You might colour lollypop sticks and encourage your child to pick out the colour that represents their zone when they arrive home from school. Or encourage your child to create a poster/ wall chart that the whole family adds coloured stickers to.

Try to involve your children in deciding how you will "check in" with them.

The more involved they are at the start, the more likely they will be to take part!



References

¹ Horesh, D & Brown, A. (2020); Chevance, A; Gourion, D; Hoertel, N. et al. (2020) ; Liu, J J., Bao, Y., Huang, X. et al. (2020)

Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families

² www.place2be.org.uk

Connecting with Others

When we are worried and anxious our 'threat system' is activated. One of the most helpful ways to soothe ourselves when the threat system is activated is to build relationships and connect with others.

We have been encouraging children at SJSJ to connect with their community by sending letters to a local care home to check in with some elderly Hackney residents.

Connection can also be strengthened at home by spending one-to-one time with your child. For younger children, try child-led play, and for older children, suggest one-to-one activities based on their interests e.g. watching their favourite TV show or playing their favourite games together.

TOP TIP: just 10 minutes of one-to-one time a few times a week can have a positive impact on your child's wellbeing and behaviour.

Promoting Recovery and Resilience

We are introducing classroom activities that focus on connection, self-esteem, hope and gratitude.²

Building self esteem - While it is natural to have feelings of helplessness and uncertainty during the current crisis, it is important for children to feel that what they say and do matters and that their actions can make a difference.

Promoting hope - Research indicates that hope significantly and positively correlates with psychological well-being and coping in the face of adversity.

Promoting gratitude - Studies suggest that finding things to be thankful for is important for our wellbeing, leading to physical and psychological benefits.

App of the month - Three Good Things: A Happiness Journal (age 6+)

This app is simple and easy-to-use, helping children focus on the positive and recognise what went well today.

Mindful Moments

Mindful moments have become part of the timetable this year at SJSJ. Twice a day (once at the start of the day and once after lunch) the children take part in a 15-minute mindfulness practice.

We have noticed that these 'mindful moments' have helped children to feel calm, relaxed, focused and ready to learn!

If you are interested in introducing mindful moments at home, then the apps below provide lots of ideas and exercises.



New in the Classroom

Calm Down Corners

This year, each class has a calm down corner, that is, a designated space in the classroom that children feel secure in. In the space we have provided tools to help them validate their feelings, self-regulate their emotions, and release difficult feelings, such as anxiety and frustration, in a safe and helpful way. We recommend talking to your children about these and introducing them at home too!

Plants – coming Spring Term 2021

Research shows that spending time in nature has a beneficial impact on our mental health. AT SJSJ we will be bringing nature indoors by adding plants to every classroom.

Introducing the Mental Health Support Team

The Mental Health Support Team is an NHS service which is part of the Wellbeing and Mental Health Service (WAMHS) for St John and St James. The team is made up of:

Educational Mental Health Practitioner – Imogen Bowles

CAMHS Practitioner – Yolande Prasad

This year, the MHST will be offering guided self help to parents and group work to parents and children who experience mild to moderate difficulties, such as anxiety or behaviour that challenges. If you would like to learn more, then please speak to Mrs Adamsdale or your child's teacher.