



26 March 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

BeWell Programme - Year 7 Runwell

We are writing to you to make you aware of the BeWell program that runs in Years 7 – 9 giving students an opportunity to think about their mental health and wellbeing, consider what helps them, and experience a variety of activities.

The branch of BeWell for Year 7 is called Runwell and will begin towards the end of May. It is a six-week running program that all students take part in and aims to educate students on the benefits that running (and exercise in general) can have on mental health.

Our aim is to get every student in Year 7 running continuously for 20 minutes through a structured six-week program of (ideally) three runs a week, progressing from running for a minute at a time to eventually running for 20 minutes. This will be done outside of PE lessons in coached sessions led by non-PE teachers. Students will miss two classroom lessons a week for the sessions, as well as completing a homework run each week. This will culminate in an event with Year 7 being taken off timetable for an afternoon at the end of Term 6 and running together for 20 minutes in a big event, celebrating everything they have achieved. It is very important that the students are aware that the pace and distance covered is not important during this whole process. The event will be arranged so that students are running laps of the field, starting at different points, so it will never be clear who has run the furthest or least.

We believe every student is capable of this and the aim is that by the end of Term 6 students are aware of not only the obvious physical benefits of running and exercise, but the impact it can have on their wellbeing. Having lived through a pandemic, we are all more aware than ever of our mental health and that of our young people. With growing numbers of young people struggling with their mental health as they get older and having to cope with the academic and social pressures of being a teenager, we are aiming to give them some tools and ideas of ways to manage the stress that they will almost inevitably feel at some point over the coming years.

Running is something that everyone is able to do at their own pace, and although some may want to set themselves goals and complete park runs or other events, many people enjoy running simply for the headspace it gives them. Runwell is not about coaching the students to run faster or further, we are simply trying to educate them on the hugely positive effect some time outside away from schoolwork, and getting the body moving, can have. Alongside the running program there will be assemblies and tutor time sessions talking through all of the above ensuring the students know this is not just about running but about mental health and wellbeing.

To get students started and thinking about running we are asking them all to complete a run of some form over the Easter holidays, take a photo and send it in. The run can be anything from taking a pet for a walk, with a sibling running around a playground, on holiday, around the local area – any form of running would be great to see and we would love a variety of photos and runs to get students talking about running. Photos can be emailed to runwell@backwellschool.net.

Details of the dates when students will need to be coming into school dressed in their PE kit ready for the run later in the day will be shared nearer the time and hopefully you will hear positive reports from your children as they progress through the weeks. We are very excited to get started and hope that your child will enjoy the process!

If you would like to read more about the links between running and mental health, please look at the websites below:

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/the-running-blog/2016/apr/19/running-good-for-mental-health-england-athletics-ambassador-mind>

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/parentsandyoungpeople/youngpeople/exerciseandmentallhealth.aspx>

Thank you in advance for your support.

Yours sincerely

Anna Randall
BeWell Coordinator