

26<sup>th</sup> September 20212

Dear Parents / Guardians,

### **RGS Peer Education Project**

This year we are once again running the School's Peer Education Project. This project has been developed by the Mental Health Foundation and is recognised as being the UK's leading peer mentoring project for mental health awareness.

A selection of Year 13 students has been trained as mental health ambassadors within the School. In pairs and under supervision of staff, they will be allocated a Year 7 form to whom they will deliver five lessons on mental health awareness:

1. What is mental health
2. Why mental health problems happen
3. Staying well
4. Looking after yourself
5. Looking after each other

Excellent resources are provided to help them teach the lessons, which will be delivered to all boys in Year 7 across a five-week period. Each week the lesson will be taught during Period 1, on a different day each week, so as not to affect the same lesson twice. So, Lesson 1 will be delivered in P1 on a Monday in the first week, Lesson 2 the following week on Tuesday, Lesson 3 on the Wednesday the week after, etc. Prior to starting the course, students will also be asked to complete a questionnaire on their knowledge about Mental Health and this will also be done at the end of the project to check for any changes in their understanding. The answers will only be seen by the teachers involved in the project.

Beyond that, the Year 13 students will remain as a point of contact connected to your son's form. They will act as a person whom the boys can approach and speak to if they don't want to talk with a teacher. There is significant empirical evidence to support this method of peer to peer teaching, particularly around issues of mental health.

The aim is to raise awareness, increase understanding, and provide an ear for boys to talk to about typical teenage concerns. It will also hopefully identify any more significant issues and offer signposts for appropriate next steps. Year 13 students will not be acting as counsellors, and will be given basic training in safeguarding and effective listening skills, with appropriate options to choose should they feel a student requires further support.

We recognise that Year 7 students will lose five lessons in total across those weeks. However, we believe that the benefits of this course are significant. It has never been more important for young men to understand that our mental health, like our physical health, is something which fluctuates, which we need to take care of, and which majorly underpins the possibility of us enjoying a healthy and fulfilled life.

As a reminder, evidence shows that eight hours of good sleep should be preceded with an hour of digital-free calm before bedtime. In addition, 20 minutes of exercise (swift walk or more) every day, dramatically reduces illness and stress, and boosts endorphins, metabolism and productivity levels. We highly recommend adopting a routine like this.

Many thanks for your support.

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