

Mental Health and Wellbeing Conference For Years 5 and 6 St. John's College Cambridge **FEEDBACK REPORT**

Background

allyance is an in-school counselling social enterprise that supports 13 primary schools in South Cambridgeshire and recognises that schools play an integral part in early identification in children's mental health issues. Experience shows us that intervention work at an early stage helps prevent the escalation of some of these children's difficulties. In order to facilitate this the conference was developed to help a wider audience of children to build up emotional resilience.

Partners

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. John's College, Cambridge • ARM • St. John's College School | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cambridge PSHE Service • Skillforce • Royal Philharmonic Orchestra • The District |
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The Aim of the Day

- To give children an understanding of the importance of good mental health as part of their wellbeing.

Activity Details

215 children (years 5/6) from 7 primary schools in South Cambridgeshire took part in the event.

Each child was provided with a work booklet 'Caring for your Wellbeing', before the event to put the topic of mental health and wellbeing in context.

The day began with opening remarks from Heidi Allen MP and Ben Slade CEO Skillforce

Afterwards the children attended four workshops led by the following organisations:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skillforce • Mindfulness • Body Image • Participation in Musical Activities
(The Feel Good Factor) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resilience St. John's College School Cambridgeshire PSHE Service Royal Philharmonic Orchestra |
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After lunch Dr. Helen Watson from St. John's College addressed the children about the collegiate system within Cambridge University.

On the way back to their coaches the children walked through the college grounds. During the walk the children learnt about and were inspired by the many features of historical interest.

Extract taken from The Cambridge Independent Newspaper, January 17th.

The headteacher from Barrington Primary School told the newspaper "I spoke to some of our parents to find out how much the children had spoken about it when they went home because it doesn't strike you as a very exciting trip.

But with this particular trip every parent that I spoke with said their child was absolutely full of what they had done that day and they told them a lot about the activities. One of our children who has particularly high anxiety levels for coming into school was already using the breathing techniques that he had learned there to calm down as he comes to school in the mornings."



Comments from the Workshop Providers

Will George <will@willgeorgemindfulness.com>

Thanks for what was an excellent day - I was really impressed with how the children engaged too, they were a pleasure to work with.

Jude Worthington St. John's College School
Mindfulness Programme

I just wanted to say congratulations on running such a wonderful conference for the children last week! I am sure they found it very helpful and they were absolutely wonderful to teach; thank you so much for inviting me!

Describe the main objective of your workshop:

To unpack the relationship between mental health and music. To demonstrate how music can be used as a helpful tool to create a sense of calm and to move from an agitated state of mind to a more manageable state.

In what ways do you feel you met this objective?

I feel that with the help of the RPO musicians I was able to clearly demonstrate the musical elements at play in our little musical excerpt borrowed from Max Richter, and get the children to discuss which elements of the music affected our moods. By this exercise we were able to develop a greater awareness of the effects of different musical components and how they can be brought into play to help with mental resilience and self management.

If you could deliver the session again what would you want to change of anything?

Perhaps to have a bit longer time with each group. To get the teachers more involved. To bring all the groups together in the end.

Sigrun Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Further comments from the children and adults at the Plenary

Mindfulness "made him feel calm"

"I never knew that my mind could travel anywhere in my body"

Music "it made him almost cry"

"there was water in my eyes"

"tingling in my hands"

"voices of the children so pure, powerfully overwhelming"

"you can make beautiful songs and sounds with a human voice and instruments"

Vocabulary overheard at the music session:

"intriguing"

"mystical"

"made me feel sad at the beginning and then it didn't"

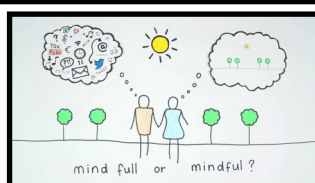
Skillforce "ok getting close together with people you didn't know"

"teamwork is great"

PSHE Service "I've never thought about someone else in that way before"

"that I don't like my friends for their looks"

"I never thought that I could think about someone's personality, not their appearance"



Thoughts from the Day

Headteacher from Barrington School

I just wanted to email to say a huge thank you for organising yesterday's conference. I appreciate that hours will have gone into the organisation of the event - it was a really

Teacher from Harston&Newton School

Thank you for organising such a lovely conference. The children thoroughly enjoyed their day at St John's and I know they will have taken a lot away with them – there was certainly a lot of food for thought.

The workshops were all pitched perfectly – I managed to get some quotes from the children on our return to school, which you may find helpful for your evaluation:

Skillforce

"I realised that anything is possible – I never thought we'd fit 50 people in a small rope circle!"
"It was great fun!"

PSHE Service

"I realised that appearances are not important to my choice of friend"
"...don't let other people comment rudely upon your body"

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

"I hadn't realised that you can change your emotions through different types of music"
"...if you made a mistake don't let it get to you"
"I loved making up our own song"

Mindfulness

"I didn't know that very simple activities could calm you down"
"I'm going to keep practising!"

A few more comments from the children

"I learnt how to stay focused"
"I never thought about my mind in the way I did today"
"I never knew counting your breath could be so calming"
"There is lots more about myself than I thought"
"I now like apples"

As a school we are focussing this year on growth mindset and there were lots of ideas shared in the workshops and talks which we will be able to return to here in school. I definitely think that the key message about the importance of acknowledging and talking about your feelings was clearly communicated to the children and will stay with them.

Comments from the children at Foxton School

"I never thought that being mindful could help with mental health problems"
"I now know what finger breathing is and it easier to calm down"
"I never knew that simple notes could make beautiful music"
"I never knew that music could be so calming"
"I never thought about someone else in that way before"

Member of alliance Steering Group

Thank you both so much for a brilliant day.
Content, venue, organisation - everything was just perfect. It was great to be with the Y5 and 6 pupils and watch them responding to each presentation/workshop.
I'm pretty sure that everyone, children and adults alike learned something that will have a positive impact on their lives. I did.

Comments from the children at Petersfield School

"I never knew what it felt like to just focus on one thing at a time"
"I didn't realise you could teach the mind"
"I never thought breathing could be so amazing"
"I used to think my mind and brain were the same thing but today I found out they aren't"
"I learnt that mindfulness is calming"
"I never knew music could sound so good with such little things"
"I never knew I could make a friend in one game"

Comments from the children at Hauxton School

"I never thought I could think about someone's personality, not their appearance"
"Feeling like I'm floating in a bubble"
"This might help in the future"
"I never knew you could cheer yourself up with music"
"I never knew that having an empty mind felt so good"
"One new thing I learnt was learning to breathe calmly"
"I never knew you could create such nice music with such simple ingredients"

Comments from the children at Meldreth School

"I never realized that I could be so peaceful just by breathing"
"I didn't know how refreshing it is to sit down and relax for 5 minutes"
"I learnt that I can use music to calm me down"
"How to do breathing exercises"
"How to sit calmly so easily"

Comments from the children at Bassingbourn School

"Not judging a book by its cover doesn't mean saying no to pretty things"
"It's not good to judge a book by its cover"
"Learning ways to calm yourself down"
"You can be relaxed from music"
"I learned to use music and breaths to calm you down"
"That feelings come through a song"

Comments from the children at Barrington School

"There can be different music for different moods"
"I never knew I could be so calm"
"I learnt to be more confident around others"
"Exercise can make you think straight"
"I never knew about mindful activities which included breathing"