

# The Two Way Street

Dear Parents/Carers

We have really loved welcoming all the children back after lockdown and getting settled back into a more normal routine! Thank you for all your support with this. We know it has been hard for some, but you have helped to make it a really smooth and successful transition.

Over the next few months we will be working hard to try to ensure that our pupils catch up on the time that has been missed, but in order to achieve this, we need them to feel happy and settled and this has been priority for us. Lockdown has been so hard for so many and we know that some of our pupils felt quite anxious about returning to school. We are all aware of the impact that Covid has had on mental health and focusing on this is vital for our children's wellbeing.

1 in 8 children have a mental health concern and unfortunately only 1 in 5 get the help they need. It is clear that coronavirus is exacerbating an already pressing mental health need.



With this in mind, we have registered for 'iSpace Wellbeing' - a mental health and wellbeing curriculum which we will be using across school.

The iSpace Wellbeing Curriculum offers an exciting whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing. It provides an age appropriate framework including who and how to ask for help, and a common language, which encourages conversations about mental, emotional, social and physical health to become part of everyday school and home life.

The curriculum provides a proactive, progressive and preventative approach to mental health and wellbeing and is a holistic approach to wellbeing education.

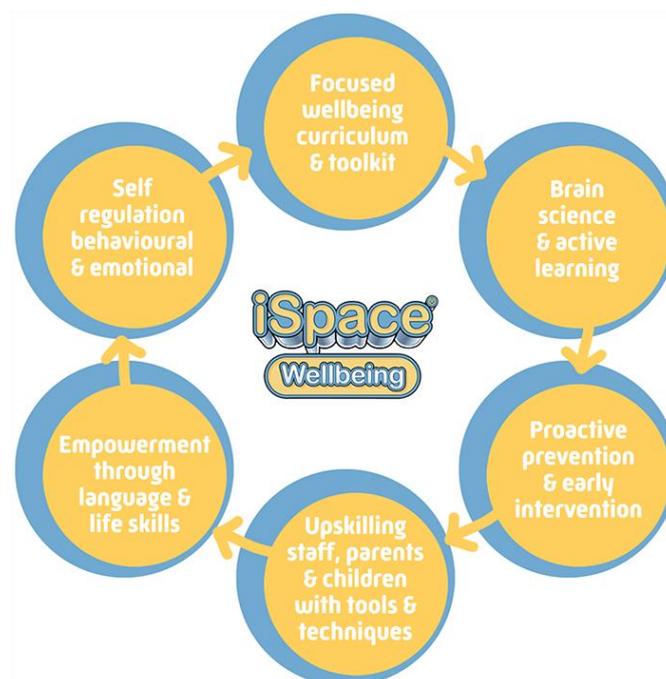
'Start stories' will be used as a tool for teachers to explore topics including 'who am I' and 'who can I be', sharing and friendship, anti-bullying, physical and emotional health, the environment and diversity in our community.

They also introduce the children to iSpace characters such as Dunican and Niam (introducing the phrases "I can" and "I am"), who live in a Wellbeing Galaxy on the Planet Wellbeing and who learn about their own and other's thoughts, behaviour and feelings.

As the curriculum progresses, the iSpace characters grow and 'travel' across the Wellbeing Galaxy consisting of 10 wellbeing themed planets. Throughout their adventures they will be collecting 'backpack' tools and other resources to support their development of healthy relationships, character, emotional intelligence, resilience, life-skills and wellbeing.

Each lesson for the children teaches them wellbeing tools, techniques and who and how to ask for help. Attention training activities and active learning are further built upon during this stage.

Staff have already completed the training on this and we are excited to see the impact as it moves through school. We have decided to teach it alongside PSHE rather than as part of it, so that mental health and wellbeing has its own dedicated session every week for Key Stage 1 and 2 children.



We know that the most effective approach is when what is learned at school crosses over to the home environment. When this happens the teacher, child and parent learn together and knowledge and behaviour is embedded in their everyday life.

**Mental health has become a buzzword with a lot of stigma attached to it. But how can you best support your child in their mental wellbeing?**

We want to help you continue the conversation at home, providing you with the language and know-how to turn these "difficult" conversations into a positive learning experience for the whole family.

iSpace member schools have access to bespoke workshops for parents to enable them to build on what their child is learning in school at home. There will be more to follow on this and we will be adding some videos to the school website to support parents at home.

## We're teaching children to SMILE

Self-talk and positivity. Manners. Individual Assertiveness. Language of co-operation and kindness. Expressing emotions of self and others

*High five for talking with...*



In Early Years the staff are launching their own mental health programme called SMILE. Teaching children to SMILE is a resource which offers key vocabulary and skills needed to teach self-regulation and help develop theory of mind.

Mrs McLeish is attending training for SMILE over the summer term, in the hope of becoming a SMILE ambassador and implementing the programme into Early Years in September.

Thank you as always for your continued support. Communication between teachers and parents is strong at the moment - let's keep that up and please speak to us if you know your child is struggling with something. If you yourselves are struggling, then pick up the phone as there will always be someone here to listen.

If you have any comments, concerns or questions - why don't you email us at;

[office@st-johns.walsall.sch.uk](mailto:office@st-johns.walsall.sch.uk)

...or call 01543 452197

