BERKHAMPSTEAD SCHOOL

NEWS FROM THE HEAD

FRIDAY 5TH FEBRUARY
SPRING TERM

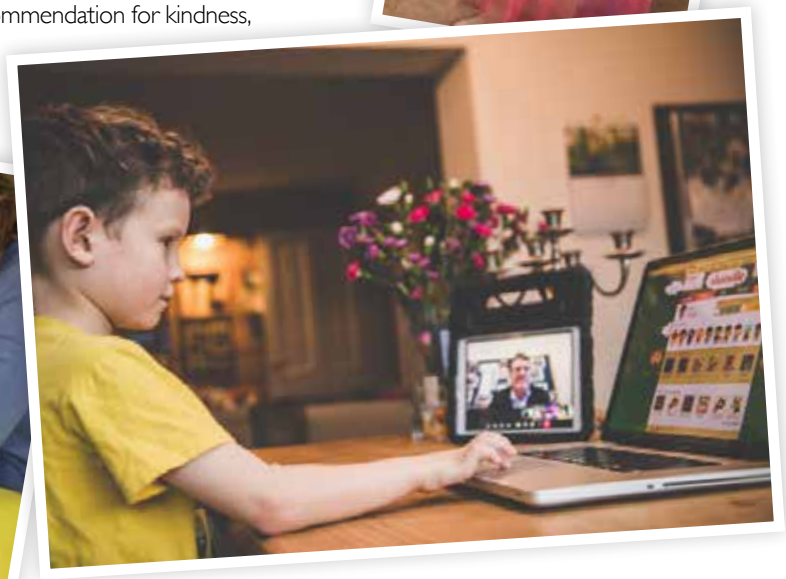
Dear Parents,

This week has been a most important one. Every year there is a Children's Mental Health Week but I think it is fair to say that at no time has a focus on mental health been more necessary than it is this year. The week has seen many beneficial activities going on. There have been Mental Health assemblies, discussions on expressing feelings, mindfulness activities, dressing to express, form activities - including the watching of Year 1's heart-warming 'I am amazing' video - and daily mental health tips from Mrs Bareham's ever-popular @Berkypastoral Twitter feed.

We started the year in lockdown in the cold and dark and, however hard we have tried to be optimistic and positive, it has been an almighty struggle for us all. Now, at the end of five long weeks of home learning, many parents are tearing their hair out, many children have had enough of the isolation and are longing to be back in school with their friends and teachers and many staff are exhausted from relentless screen work of one sort or another; we are all suffering. Unfortunately, much as we would love to help, we are unable to take children into Key Worker Club because they are struggling to settle to their work and missing their friends; it is too busy and we need to maintain rigorous health and safety measures. I can only hope that the half term break and the possibility of a return on March 8th will help people to find the inner strength to carry on for a little while longer.

As I have said before, though, there is light at the end of the tunnel and we must focus on that. There have even been some benefits to all of this. We were very excited when Mr Banks's inaugural wellbeing podcast was featured on BBC Radio Gloucestershire this week and, along with Mr Banks and Mrs Bareham, Isabella, Serena and Matilda E from Year 6 were interviewed. Many of us have become more appreciative of our lives and of the natural world – how lovely to receive the photos of some of your children birdwatching last weekend! People have got together to show thanks for small acts of heroism and been inspired to do great things themselves. We have supported each other and been more appreciative of our friends and family. We have certainly become more aware of the importance of good hygiene. Some of us have even done some impressive baking (not me, though!)

Perhaps this crisis has given us all a clearer perspective on what is important in life. We must prioritise, and happiness, contentment and physical and mental health should be at the very top of our list. In school, although it might appear that the emphasis is on academic achievement in that the day is largely made up of lessons, we value kindnessabove just about all other qualities; it is one of the most important character traits. We award the two Kindness Cups every half term – who will it be this time? - and we make a point of recognising acts of kindness wherever we see them; if your child gets a Star of the Week certificate or a Commendation for kindness, you should be particularly delighted.



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NEWS FROM THE HEAD CONTINUED

As a community - even in lockdown when we are spread far and wide - we can still be thoughtful, helpful and appreciative; giving and receiving words and acts of kindness makes a huge difference to people's lives.

This week has seen the sad death of Captain Sir Tom Moore who stole the hearts of the nation - and most of the world - with his charismatic and inspirational grit and determination, his integrity and his bravery both in World War 2 and in 2020. It is tragic that he died of pneumonia and Covid but to my mind, having such an amazing final year of life means that he left us on a 'high'. He teaches us that you can still make a difference however old you are; I for one aspire to be like him - optimistic and cheerful to the last!

Gill

Gill Agg
Deputy Head