



AMESBURY SCHOOL HINDHEAD

AMESBURY SCHOOL ANNOUNCES MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE WITH SEVEN SURREY, HAMPSHIRE AND WEST SUSSEX SCHOOLS AIMING TO STRENGTHEN SUPPORT NETWORKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Amesbury School, Hindhead has formed a local partnership network of seven local schools to strengthen the mental health and wellbeing support networks available to young people of primary school age. Representatives from seven local schools, have formed a collaborative network dedicated to establishing and delivering best practices in mental health and wellbeing support for young people across schools in the area. The group gathered last week for an interactive workshop to confirm their commitment to the initiative, led by Amesbury's Head of Mental Health and Wellbeing, Jo Clark, RN.

In recent years, the mental health and wellbeing of young people has come under increasing scrutiny due to the pressures of online and digital life, which can negatively impact them. These challenges are compounded by existing pressures relating to school, friendships, and overall wellbeing. The UK Government has responded by stipulating that state schools should develop a Mental Health and Wellbeing role in the lives of young people, allocating funds for training and curriculum integration.

Amesbury School, a trailblazer in this domain, is one of the first independent prep schools in the county to establish this dedicated function for primary school-aged children. Their approach involves offering tailored support for children who are not injured or sick but need time to decompress and work through their feelings outside of the classroom. In addition to addressing the root causes of isolated worries and concerns, the school focuses on equipping children with essential tools for managing their feelings at an early age. Developing these skills is crucial for learning to manage mental health as an adult.

Jon Whybrow, Head of Amesbury School, commented on the initiative, "Pastoral care and wellbeing have always been integral components of our core school curriculum. We are thrilled to have formally appointed Jo Clark to the role of Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead, and to be sharing our resources and expertise with other local schools. This collaborative partnership ensures that we are all challenging, learning from, and supporting one another in our shared goal of delivering the best possible support for local primary school-aged children."

The schools committed to the network are:

- Alton School -
- Amesbury School, Hindhead
- Camelsdale Primary School
- Charterhouse
- Churchers Junior School
- Edgeborough
- St Bartholomews

The aims of the partnership are:

1. **Share best practice** in Mental Health and Wellbeing support through case studies and review of practice and procedure development.
2. **To offer CPD** and learning group experiences to develop key staff knowledge, skills and training opportunities.
3. **To develop and run an annual forum**/conference for schools in Surrey and bordering counties with a specific focus on Mental Health and Wellbeing in schools.
4. **To bring together pupils and/or staff from different schools to share experiences** in relation to key topics such as online bullying/harassment, protected characteristics, coping with exam pressure, body image/peer pressure, social anxiety and emotionally based school avoidance.

Outcomes of the inaugural workshop:

The relationship between school and home was identified as key – parent meetings and workshops are clearly an aspect of support that is happening across many schools and really helps to link the care of the individual.

Dr Tom Smiley delivered a presentation, from a clinical psychologist's perspective, on the core building blocks to creating an environment in schools that fosters wellbeing and supports good mental health. Character development plays a key part of this, alongside the academics.

Sharing what our working practices are and the different set-ups and resources available was a key part of the initial planning focus- to collaborate, we needed to understand what challenges we are all facing and how we can help each other.

Comment from the workshop and initial planning meeting from a partnership school "this has come at such a perfect time for us- we are sometimes limited with resources and time- our staff are working so hard to support children- it is amazing to get together with other schools and share what is working and what we are all doing to support our pupils and staff".

The next meeting will focus on talking through different approaches to managing pressure in the school setting- academic, social and in sports- and how this impacts positively and negatively on different children.

Any school wishing to join the network should contact: J.clark@amesburyschool.co.uk

Ends

About Amesbury School

Amesbury School was founded in 1870 and is the oldest preparatory school in the Haslemere/Hindhead area. Set in a leafy estate between the South Downs National Park and the Surrey Hills, it is an independent day school co-educating children between the ages of 2 and 13. For more information please visit www.Amesburyschool.co.uk

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