

Thursday 7th September 2023

Dear Parents/Carers

I am writing to let you know about the available Mental Health support for your child, should you feel they need it.

Bereavement and Separation Support

We are able to provide support for any child who:

- has experienced the death of a family member, friend or sibling, or;
- whose family have experienced a relationship separation or divorce.

Rainbows/Sunbeams is a peer support group run by trained facilitators within the school. We offer a safe place where we will sensitively guide your child to begin to share their experiences, supporting them to express and understand their feelings, to feel acceptance for what has happened, and to feel a sense of belonging and love. The programme lasts for 12-14 weeks and supports self-esteem, trust, confidence and resilience, promoting emotional development and positive, healthy relationships.

The Growing Hope project brings together bereaved children to garden at regular sessions during school time. These children can experience the benefits of gardening throughout the year whilst having the opportunity to meet with other grieving children and create an informal network of support. The garden will provide a quiet reflective space for children to cope with their grief. There is strong evidence linked to gardening and connectivity to nature with improved mental and physical health.

Emotional Wellbeing Support

What do we offer?

We have two ELSAs in school, myself and Miss Weller. ELSA is an initiative developed and supported by Educational Psychologists. It is recognised that children learn better and are happier in school if their emotional needs are met. We have undergone training, and receive regular support from, Educational Psychologists from our Local Authority to plan and deliver programmes of support to pupils who are experiencing temporary or longer-term emotional needs.

How does it work?

Sessions are planned to support children in recognising their feelings, developing new skills and coping strategies that allow them to manage social and emotional demands more effectively. These sessions are fun, using a range of activities such as: games, role play with puppets, arts and crafts and mindfulness and take place in the 'ELSA room,' which provides a warm, calm, safe place for the child to feel supported and nurtured where they can share their thoughts and feelings. The majority of ELSA sessions are delivered on an individual basis, but sometimes small group work is more appropriate, especially in the area of social and friendship skills. The programme is weekly and lasts usually between 6-10 weeks depending on the individual child.

Young Carers

A young carer is any young person who helps look after someone in their family – this may be due to illness, disability, mental health problems or an addiction. We are committed to developing provision for young carers and their families, so that they can attend school, enjoy their learning and fully participate in all areas of school life. Our young carers meet weekly where they participate in fun engaging activities. We work closely with Hillingdon Young Carers Trust who visit our young carers in school half termly and run a fortnightly support group within the local community.

How can my child get support?

There are two ways your child can access ELSA support:

1. Class Teachers and other school staff can refer a child who they think would benefit from ELSA sessions. We will always contact you and seek your permission before beginning any work with your child.
2. Parents/Carers can request support directly. If you think your child may need my support or if you would like some advice with how to support your child at home please email me on ELSA@williambyrd.school

Please do not hesitate to get in touch to discuss any concerns over your child's mental health.

Yours sincerely

Mrs C Houston

ELSA & Mental Health Coordinator

