



2 March 2020

Dear Parents & Carers,

I am delighted to inform you that following the Independent Verification on 28 January 2020 we have been awarded the Wellbeing Award for Schools. Mr Ayling has shared this good news with students and staff but has emphasised that this is a foundation from which we build our provision for mental health and wellbeing, a good start on a journey which we know will be ongoing.

I thought you might be interested in the feedback we received.

Commentary on the evidence provided:

The King's (The Cathedral) School is an outstanding school in terms of Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health (EWMH). The school obviously sees EWMH as central to its work and has done for many years, particularly the last two years, during which, they have used the Wellbeing Award for Schools (WAS) process to constructively evaluate what is working well and identify areas to develop and improve even further.

The evidence provided for the verification was abundant, clear and accessible and reflected the excellent work being done at this school in terms of EWMH. It was clear that staff, students, governors and families all value the school's focus on the EWMH of the whole community.

The evidence was not just in the portfolio; it was around the school, both physically with posters and information, but also in the way people treated each other, both adults and students. There was a tangible atmosphere of calmness, purposefulness and kindness everywhere within the school.

SLT, the change team, staff, governors and the students I spoke to, demonstrate an impressive understanding of the EWMH needs of all their peers, colleagues and families. Everyone clearly understands the importance of EWMH and are passionate about everyone feeling safe, listened to, welcome and supported within the school. There is evidence throughout the school and in the portfolio that EWMH is about the *whole* person and community, enabling empowerment and supporting resilience.

Strengths identified during verification:

The vision statement, as set out in the Headteacher's welcome message on the school's website, describes fully what the school believes in and it is evident that this is put into action every day. It permeates everything they do at The King's School. The approach to EWMH is proactive and embedded in all areas of the school and curriculum.

The King's School is a welcoming and friendly place to visit; when I arrived, I was warmly greeted at reception and looked after by staff and students throughout the day. Although this is a fairly large school, in many respects it had the feel of a small school; indeed, The King's School describes its self as a family.

The school demonstrated a detailed understanding of the risk factors relating to EWMH and have a strategic, planned response in place. They have a clear, strong and practical MH statement, with key roles and responsibilities outlined, which is linked to the school policies. EWMH is not an 'add on' at this school, it is part of school life and learning. For example, there is a member of staff solely employed to organise and support school trips, adding to positive EWMH through a range of experiences and raising self-esteem. There is a 'therapy dog' in the school, as well as a huge range of awareness raising initiatives, reducing stigma and encouraging open conversations about EWMH.

Staff, parents and pupils all praised the school and the ways in which it supports positive EWMH of everyone and has systems in place when individuals need help with their EWMH. The whole school community is regularly consulted on their views and are encouraged to share them and also seek help when required. One student was a little negative about her personal experience of support with EWMH at the school; however, when discussed further, this situation was in the past and she talked positivity about the support over the last year or two, highlighting the positive move forward the school has made in relation to EWMH.

The students are well informed about EWMH and actively involved with all areas of school life. They have clearly been involved in the development of the schools EWMH strategy and feel a strong sense of ownership towards the school and its community. The students I spoke to feel empowered and feel their voice is heard. In fact, they expressed the next steps they felt appropriate for development within the school: a clearer menu of access to the support available to them regarding EWMH and the possibility of a school counsellor.

The school has various student led support systems carried out by the students in Years 12 and 13. There is an active school council and student voice is sought and listened to by all members of staff, including SLT. Various changes have been made as a result of the student voice, for example the staffing structure for EWMH and a Sixth Form Café.

Partnerships with parents/carers are strong. Staff are very positive about the school and supportive of each other. They appreciate the wide range of support they receive with regard to their own EWMH by SLT and their colleagues.

There is evidence of joint working with a wide range of external agencies and some involvement in commissioning in partnership with health. Strategically, within the school, the work and initiatives already in place are continually being scrutinized and analysed, ensuring continued progression in all areas of EWMH, particularly for students (an area highlighted by the stakeholder evaluations).

Areas for development:

The School have identified consolidation as their main focus at the moment, repeating and cascading training where appropriate and embedding practice. They also identified continued development and involvement in local commissioning.

Verifier recommendation:

I am delighted to recommend that this school be awarded the Wellbeing Award for Schools for a period of three years.

Many thanks for those of you that completed the parent/carer survey and especially to those parents involved as part of the stakeholder groups that met the Independent Verifiers on 28 January 2020; it was much appreciated.

Please be assured that mine and the School's commitment to looking after the mental health and wellbeing of both students and staff will remain a key priority as we move through this academic year and those to follow.

Yours faithfully,

Helen Birch
Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral)