



Queen Mary's Grammar School

A message from the Headmaster, 10 February 2021

First word

After an intense six weeks, it is important that we all take a break next week in order to re-charge. No additional assignments will be set and staff will not be delivering any remote learning over the half term. I hope that students take the chance to have some rest, including time away from screens. Please do continue to follow the advice on wellbeing in this update and through other school channels. Please also take the time to complete the Wellbeing award surveys, as communicated last week:

[Student survey](#)

[Parent survey](#)

Think piece: 'See Yourself' group (Mr Fadden)

The summer of 2020 was a momentous one for many reasons. Not only were we still fighting the spread of Covid-19 but we were also faced with a growing awareness of the battles for racial justice – both in the USA and further afield. Like you, no doubt, I watched events unfold with a sense of horror and outrage whilst asking myself the following question: what can I do to advance a cause which is impelling so many thousands of people to take to the streets in the midst of a pandemic? I saw the statue of former slave trader, Edward Colston, toppled into the docks in Bristol. I scrolled through Twitter feeds and newspaper articles about the need to reset the dial, whether that was in terms of how we speak about race or what we teach in schools and universities. Out of these experiences and impressions emerged a renewed impetus to reinvent our school's English curriculum to better reflect the makeup of our student body and the world in which we all live. Becoming head of department allowed me to initiate a debate about the texts we study and the ways in which we teach them. I had always considered myself to be a fairly liberal person: someone who was on the right-side of such debates; who sought to promote tolerance in my classroom and in my role as head of year, too. I had invited black and Asian poets into QM, when money was more plenty. My own parents had told me of their own immigrant experiences in the 1950s onwards: no blacks, no Irish, no dogs etc. I felt pretty woke, as they say. It was a given. Or so I thought. I soon came to realise that this process of enlightenment must evolve; it was not enough to settle for a comfortable stance. It was necessary to effect real change, to even break down existing structures and replace them with better, more modern ways of doing things. A common message I heard was this: it is not enough to not be racist; we must be actively anti-racist. It was in this spirit, then, that we began to consider such matters in English departmental meetings and swiftly decided to invite a number of sixth form students to a forum in the winter term. Sat in the hall, socially distanced, we would openly discuss their response to the curriculum, the lived curriculum, as they moved through the school; they would discuss, with us, the experience of reading about crooks in *Of Mice and Men*, and the language used by Steinbeck in his iconic story, and what they missed elsewhere in the curriculum. This listening exercise proved to be a fulfilling one for all parties: staff and students, alike. We talked about how it felt to teach and study such books and how much better it would be to see black authors, and writers from other diverse cultures, taking a more prominent place in the curriculum-and not just tucked away in some other cultures section of a GCSE course; to read directly about their experiences and not solely mediated through the eyes of established writers. As I realised that this group must become a fixture, and not just a one-off experience, I struggled to come up with a suitable name (we need names for things). We considered BVEC (Black voices in the English Curriculum); Own Voices; Diverse Voices in the English Curriculum. Eventually a smart kid in the sixth form (Daniel) suggested See Yourself and that name stuck. It says it all, really. Something for everyone.

This process of change is not an easy or a speedy one; curriculum change is like turning around a steamer. It takes time; to formulate plans and to bed them in. But it has started and it will continue. Only this week we met for the third time, virtually, to consider how *Liccle Bit* by Alex Wheatle, could sit in the Year 9 curriculum. Next time around we will consider *Refugee Boy* by Benjamin Zephaniah and its potential as a Year 8 text. In time we hope to open up the curriculum, from 7 through to 13, offering students stories, authors and themes which better represent their own experiences. Because this is what matters. It is only by seeing yourself in books, and music, and movies that you get the desire to read more; to watch more; and to become a creative person yourself. It becomes real. And so, in time, I would like this forum to embrace all cultures and experiences in our school- offering us the chance to hold talks, readings- and maybe even share some delicious food and drink from around the world- all the while discussing our different experiences in school and elsewhere.

Because, you see: seeing yourself can, and should be, fun.

Political matters in India

Following on from Mr Farnell's note in the Wellbeing newsletter last week about the [current situation involving farmers in parts of India](#), a number of members of the school have contacted me on the matter. I am proud that I lead a school community where students speak so eloquently and passionately on matters dear to them and that they want to raise awareness to enact change. It is vital that we seek to learn about such issues and take actions that lead to positive change. On this matter, I encourage members of the community to find out more and follow the democratic process of enacting change through [political debate](#).

You v Train (Mr Collins)

Network Rail in partnership with Learn Live are working to help raise awareness to students across the UK educating them about the dangers of the train tracks through interactive digital delivery. It is a 15 minutes video (hard hitting) and reminds us all of the danger that railways pose.

Please click on the [link](#) and enter this e-mail address to watch the video: railsafety@learnliveuk.com

Year 12 Futures Evening (Mr Matley)

The Year 12 Futures Evening is in an online format this year. By clicking on this [link](#), students and parents can access a series of video clips to replace the sections that would have been presented in school.

If you do access the content, please provide some feedback via a short [Forms survey](#)

Year 9 Parents' Evening 11-2-21

Ahead of the evening, myself and Miss Naguthney have recorded videos, to replace what we would have said in our address mid-way through the evening. Please take the time to watch them from the links below:

[Miss Naguthney](#)

[Mr Langton](#)

Mr Lax also sent out digital resources to inform the GCSE options process. We would also be grateful if you could complete the [Year 9 parental questionnaire](#), which replaces the paper version normally collected. Your feedback is important to us.

Children who receive Free School Meals

In line with the national arrangements, the trust will not be issuing vouchers over half-term. These will resume from the week beginning 22nd February. If parents are struggling to retrieve vouchers could they please email FSM@the.merciantrust.org and the enquiry will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Mental health and Wellbeing

Following the mental health awareness events last week, I have included some resources at the end of this update from Hope Virgo, specifically focussed on eating disorders.

I have also included the regular weekly Wellbeing Wednesday newsletter.

It is a challenging time for us all and it is vital that students talk about any worries they have. We are carrying out welfare checks across the school and parents will be contacted to make sure all is well. Staff and students can raise concerns via the wellbeing email address well-being@gmgs.walsall.sch.uk or by using the QR code.

This account is monitored by the SEMH team:

- Mr Collins (Assistant Head and DSL)
- Mr Farnell (Safeguarding and Welfare Officer)
- Ms Hendricks (SEMH mentor)
- Miss Weston (6th Form Operations Manager, Girls welfare)



Alumni Careers Meets (Mr Sunley)

The second of the Careers Meets sessions took place this week. The standard of these have been very high and students in Years 9 and above should look out for the upcoming sessions after half term, which take place on a Tuesday lunchtime via Teams:

Date	Speaker	Job Title/Industry	Time at QMGS
23rd Feb	Olivier Swain	Associate at Signature Litigation	2002-2009
25th Feb	Peter Freeth	Careers	1979-1985
2nd March	Owain Johnson	MD, Global Head of Research and Product Development at CME Group	1987-1993
9th March	Tulsi Parekh	Research Optometrist at Moorfields Eye Hospital, London	2009-2011
16th March	Robert Selmes	Head of Rights for Sky Sports	1998-2005
23rd March	Mohammed Al-Sharif	Senior Civil Engineer	2007-2014
30th March	Simran Patel	Investment Banking Analyst at Barclays Investment Bank	2008-2015

National guidelines

Please continue to follow the [national guidelines](#) regarding Covid-19, in terms of recognising symptoms, testing & tracing, self-isolation, control measures and other information. Do continue to inform us of positive cases within the student body in line with our [established procedures](#).

Remote learning

I have received some excellent feedback about the online learning that is going on and I am grateful to all staff for the time and effort that is going into this. If you haven't already, please read our [remote learning statement](#). Please ensure that your child attends all of their live sessions if they are fit and well. Registers will be taken for these sessions. The pastoral team will contact parents if there are concerns regarding the completion of work remotely, or persistent non-attendance at live sessions.

QMA Fundraising

As a result of the current restrictions, we are unable to run our regular QMA events. However, parents can still support the school in other ways. The QMA are continuing to promote the **Easy Fundraising scheme** – a great way of raising money for the school with very little effort. Make sure you register, if you haven't already, at: <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/queenmarysgrammar/>

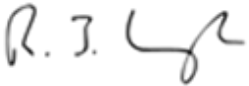
The live calendar and term dates for 2020-21 are available on the School's website:

<https://qmgs.walsall.sch.uk/school-live-calendar/>

<https://qmgs.walsall.sch.uk/term-dates/>

Thank you for your continued support and feedback

Regards



Richard Langton

Headmaster

Queen Mary's Grammar School, Walsall

01922 720696 www.qmgs.org

Twitter: @qmgs1554



Well-being Wednesday

A WEEKLY WELL-BEING NEWSLETTER



Each week we hope to bring you all a few hints and tips in order to improve or manage your well-being. Don't forget you can reach us for support at well-being@qmgs.walsall.sch.uk

WINNING WAYS TO WELLBEING



INTRODUCE THESE FIVE SIMPLE STRATEGIES INTO YOUR LIFE AND YOU WILL FEEL THE BENEFITS.

PE Exercise Schedule



This week the PE staff have set 7 challenges for everyone:

Burpees - 1min

wall sit

Standing long jump

Shoulder taps - 1 min

Check out @QMGSSPORT/Teams for the rest of the challenges

Quote of the week

"We are so accustomed to disguise ourselves to others that in the end we become disguised to ourselves".

Francois de La Rochefoucauld

A reminder that we have to be honest with ourselves. Own your feelings and process them, rather than trying to hide them.

Mr Farnell

Half Term

It is fair to say that this first half term has been difficult. When the half term break arrives next week i would suggest that students really take the time to just relax

Try to spend as little time as possible on devices. You will have been staring at a screen nearly all day every day for a while now. Take the opportunity to read (i know that is what i will be trying to do) or get out of the house and go for a walk. Whatever it is you decide to do, enjoy it and make the most of the time off!

Resources from mental health week - Help and support for Eating Disorders

Websites/numbers

- BEAT: www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk Helpline: 0808 801 0677
- Studentline: 0808 801 0811
- Youthline: 0808 801 0711
- Shout for support in a crisis: www.giveusashout.org text 05258
- anorexiabulimiare: www.anorexiabulimiare.org.uk
- Hub Of Hope: www.hubofhope.co.uk
- Crisis Text Line www.crisistextline.org 24/7 crisis support UK text 85258
- Samaritans: www.samaritans.org 24 hour service call 116 123 jo@samaritans.org
- Mind and Soul Foundation: www.mindandsoulfoundation.org

Courses:

tastelife: www.tastelifeuk.org

Keys To Freedom www.mercyuk.org/keystofreedom (Christian discipleship)

Mercy Ministries www.mercyuk.org

Nicholaston House <http://www.nicholastonhouse.org/eating-disorder-recovery-courses>

Counsellors

BACP – British Association of Christian Counsellors www.bacp.co.uk

ACC – Association of Christian Counsellors www.acc-uk.org

Specialist Eating Disorder:

Dr Chi-Chi Obuaya – www.drchiclinic.com

Melanie Oliver – melanie@roleoftheheart.com

Dietitians:

www.foodforthebrain.org (Educational campaign promoting the link between food and mental health)

www.freelancedietitian.org (List of freelance dietitians)

www.nhs.uk/change4life (NHS providing information and tips on healthy eating and living)

Some recommended books:

- First Steps out of Eating Disorders – Dr Kate Middleton and Dr Jane Smith
- Eating Disorders: The path to recovery – Dr Kate Middleton
- Life Without Ed – Jenni Schaefer
- Stand Tall Little Girl – Hope Virgo
- Beyond Chaotic Eating – Helena Wilkinson
- Insight Into Eating Disorders – Helena Wilkinson
- Puppet On A String – Helena Wilkinson
- Bodies – Susie Orbach
- A New Name - Grace and Healing for anorexia – Emily Scrivener
- A New Day - Emily Scrivener
- Mirror Mirror: Breaking Free from False Reflections – Arianna Walker
- Overcoming Binge Eating – Dr Christopher G Fairburn

Other recommended emotional support books:

- From Pain to Pearls: How to turn your trouble into triumph – Arianna Walker
- Listening to Shame – Brene Brown (Youtube video also)
- The Power of Vulnerability – Brene Brown (Youtube also)
- Beauty for Ashes – Joyce Meyer
- The Battlefield of the Mind – Joyce Meyer
- Facing Fear and Finding Freedom – Joyce Meyer
- Disappointment with God – Philip Yancey
- Where is God When It Hurts? – Philip Yancey
- Boundaries – Cloud & Townsend
- Who Switched off My Brain? – Dr Caroline Leaf
- Purpose Driven Life – Rick Warren
- Anger Workbook – Frank Minirth
- Will van der Hart and Rob Waller:
- The Worry Book
- The Perfectionism Book
- The Guilt Book
- The Power of Belonging

Did you know?

Around **1.25m** people in the UK have an eating disorder.[†]
† www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk

£1.26bn per year
On an annual basis, eating disorders cost the health service £80-100million and the economy more than £1.26bn.*

* Joint Commissioning Panel for Mental Health (www.jcpmh.info/wp-content/uploads/10keymsg-eatingdisorders.pdf)

Eating disorders come in all shapes and sizes

This guide has been produced to help people understand eating disorders and to provide useful information for tackling difficult conversations and situations surrounding the epidemic of eating disorders.

This guide has been produced to help people better understand eating disorders and to provide useful suggestions to help anyone who is supporting someone with an eating disorder for tackling difficult conversations and situations surrounding the epidemic of eating disorders.

It has been developed by clinicians in partnership with key local stakeholders and has been peer reviewed by other clinicians and service users.

With special thanks to Hope Virgo for her support in developing this resource.

Common myths about eating disorders

Myth
Males don't get eating disorders

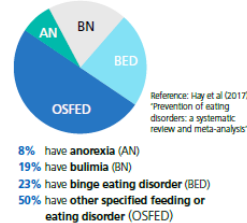
Myth
You have to be stick thin to have an eating disorder

Myth
Eating disorders are a choice

Myth
Dieting will help an eating disorder

Statistics

- Around **1.25million** people in the UK have an eating disorder[†]
- **8%** of these have anorexia[†]
- Eating disorders do not discriminate by gender. It is estimated that around **25%** of those affected by an eating disorder **are male**.[†]
- People with eating disorders are at an increased risk of suicide and death. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate among psychiatric disorders with anorexia nervosa having the highest rate affecting young adults.
- On an annual basis, eating disorders **cost** the health service **£80-100million** and cost the economy more than **£1.26bn** annually.*



Things to avoid saying or doing when talking to someone with an eating disorder

I have been told to just **gain weight without any recognition that I may be struggling** with an eating disorder and with **no support** about the mentality **behind recovering** from an eating disorder which led me to be in quasi-recovery for a very long time before severely relapsing.

Avoid saying:

- You look much healthier than the last time I saw you
- You are so skinny eat something
- I was lovely and skinny like you when I was younger
- We will just put you on medication
- You don't look thin
- What's your secret to losing weight, I need it
- Try the xxx diet, it worked for me
- You'll feel better if you lose some weight
- The word chronic – this is an unhelpful word

Remember:

- When faced with food in a social situation it is frightening when people point out you are not eating/eating enough and draw attention to it in a group of people
- Talk about feelings, not food, weight or shape
- People often feel they don't deserve treatment
- Don't be afraid to ask questions

NICE guidelines (NG69)

NICE has noted that **early intervention leads to the best possible recovery outcome**, with their guidelines stating: "1.2.8 Do not use single measures as BMI or duration of illness to determine whether to offer treatment for an eating disorder."

Early intervention

People deserve help regardless of their weight.

If we get in there early, people are more likely to recover.

Growing evidence suggests that eating disorders are associated with significant structural and functional brain changes. Eating disorder behaviours are initially rewarding, then habitual, and then neurocognitively engrained.

Key information

Eating disorder treatment **is not about** just feeding someone or getting them to go on a diet.

This is a **mental illness**.

There is a high percentage of people who do not fit in to the more **well-known eating disorders** and therefore we need to make sure everyone feels listened to.

Remember that this might be the **only chance** we have to encourage that person to open up.

When someone asks for help

Be **curious**

Be **kind**

Always have a **plan in place**

Open ended questions

Listen and don't just **jump to conclusions**

Listening and not just **jumping to conclusions**

Offer a **regular catch up**

Be **candid**

Where next?

It is **essential** that a plan is always in place when someone leaves services – if there is no referral in place, have another appointment booked with the GP.

We don't want to leave people with a **long period** of time with **no support**.

Explain how you feel

"I am **struggling** with food at the moment"

"My **mood** feels..."

"I would like some **support**"

"This has been happening for... **months/years**"

Sometimes it might be easier to just write a **letter/e-mail**

If you think someone is struggling

Approach the conversation in a **neutral place**

Always go in with a **plan** in place in case they do open up

Remember that the eating disorder might be a **symptom** of something else going on

Be **direct**

Be **patient**

Where to get support:

www.hubofhope.co.uk

www.anorexiabulimiacare.org.uk

www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk

Beat Helpline: 0808 801 0677

Beat Youthline: 0808 801 0711

Beat Studentline: 0808 801 0811

Or text SHOUT to: 85258

Or text HOPE to: 85258



Follow us on LinkedIn
South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust



Follow us on Twitter:
@swlstg



Like us on Facebook:
swlstg



Subscribe to our channel on Youtube:
swlstg

www.swlstg.nhs.uk