

ISA Awards 2023 Case Study: Excellence and Innovation in Mental Health and Wellbeing **COLCHESTER HIGH SCHOOL**

JUNE 2024



History of the School

With a history stretching back 140 years, Colchester Prep & High School has evolved from a single-sex institution into a renowned co-educational Prep and High School. Founded in 1882 as Minden House Girls School, the school has weathered the storms of two world wars, even serving as an annexe to a local hospital during World War I.

Today, the school fosters well-rounded individuals preparing them for the challenges of the 21st century. Their unique approach centres on a STEAM-powered curriculum, a blend of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics. This innovative programme equips students with creative and critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative skills. They cultivate a global perspective in their students, helping to nurture a deep sense of social responsibility. The school emphasises environmental consciousness, encouraging students to care for the world around them and contribute positively to their communities. This holistic approach aims to develop "changemakers" – individuals who not only excel academically but also possess the empathy and initiative to create a better tomorrow.

The school's commitment to its students extends beyond the classroom walls. Small class sizes allow teachers to provide personalised attention and guidance. A vibrant extra-curricular programme and a robust pastoral care system ensure each student feels supported and empowered. The core values of kindness, tolerance, respect, and perseverance are woven into all aspects of the school community. Students are encouraged to embrace diversity, celebrate individuality, and develop the courage to speak up for what they believe in. By fostering these values, the school aims to cultivate well-balanced individuals who are not only academically successful but also compassionate, responsible, and resilient. Colchester Prep & High School is part of the Cognita family, a global network of over 100

schools. This membership opens doors to a world of opportunities. Students and teachers gain exposure to diverse cultures and perspectives, fostering a spirit of collaboration and shared learning, and offering a unique and enriching educational experience.

Steeped in history yet firmly focused on the future, the school equips its students with the academic foundation, global perspective, and essential life skills needed to thrive in an ever-changing world.



Ms Karen Gracie-Langrick
Headteacher



<https://www.colchesterhighschool.co.uk>



The aims of the well-being strategy

- Integrate mental health awareness across the curriculum.
- Make staff wellbeing a priority.
- Promote mindfulness and self-regulation through embedded practice.
- Celebrate 'Global Wellbeing Day' as a school community. Global Wellbeing Day focuses on aspects of wellbeing for example sleep, online presence, diet and exercise.
- Develop ways for students to support each other in a mentoring capacity.
- Implement mental health and well-being strategies, evaluate their effectiveness, and plan the next steps.
- Create a space where everybody feels confident to seek help and thrive.
- To tackle tough topics and to break down the stigma surrounding mental health.
- Create a rigorous system for early intervention and thorough signposting of support to external agencies.
- Provide opportunities for students to develop their leadership capabilities while promoting well-being.
- Develop connections with the local and wider community.
- Embrace the ethos of 'Be well, Live well, Learn Well'



The actions taken to implement the well-being strategy

- We have a dedicated Pupil Leadership Team of Wellbeing Ambassadors made up of pupils in Years 2-10. The Ambassadors meet regularly throughout the term to discuss how we can enhance and promote pupil wellbeing. They have come up with many initiatives including 'Friendship club', mindfulness workshops and charitable community events. Pupils have delivered assemblies to their peers and tackled topics such as bullying and banter and the impact on mental health.
- Wellbeing Ambassadors have led events such as pre-loved sales and food bank donations which has created connections with the local community and has made our pupils feel proud to make a difference.
- Assemblies are held regularly on topics such as anxiety, mental wellness, and the importance of connection. This is further reinforced in form time wellbeing sessions and through attendance at wellbeing clubs.
- Staff are equipped with a wellbeing charter, social events and clubs were organised, and we provided wellness hampers. Staff are also part of the school 'house' system. Both inset training and other activities are derived in these houses which provides a sense of school community and belonging.
- Peace time/Calm time- 'Peace Time' and 'Calm Time' has been implemented in both the Prep and Senior schools. These are two different types of strategies that class teachers can use to support day-to-day, these are strategies devised and implemented by Ms Haggerty and introduced during Mindfulness Sessions.
- 'Peace Time' – is 2x five-minute periods of silent reflection every day. We run these sessions in all Prep classes after break time and after lunch. The focus is allowing and accepting some silence and space in our minds.
- 'Calm Time' – is a behaviour management strategy to use in class. Pupils are given a 1-minute mindfulness technique (finger tracing or mantra) to 'self-regulate' behaviour and emotions, to give pupils the opportunity to correct and calm.



- Hosting guest speakers encouraged open conversations about mental health across the school.
- We participate annually in a Cognita-wide "Global Wellbeing Day" focusing on aspects like sleep, online presence, and healthy habits.
- Facilitate peer mentoring programs including a "Friendship Club" to help Year 6 students transition to Year 7.
- Regularly survey staff and students to assess the effectiveness of programs and make adjustments.

OUTCOMES

Our commitment to mental health and wellbeing has fostered a thriving environment where students and staff alike feel supported and empowered. Students gain the confidence to openly discuss their mental health, readily seeking help from staff and mentors when needed. Initiatives like "Peace Time" and "Calm Time" have proven demonstrably effective, with surveys showing a positive impact on both student behaviour and their approach to learning. Furthermore, students surveyed reported using the calming strategies learned in mindfulness workshops, with many using them daily leading to a more self-regulated student body, better equipped to manage their emotions and navigate challenges. We have developed a strong sense of community, encouraging connections through peer mentoring programmes. The "Friendship Club" specifically designed to help Year 6 students transitioning to Year 7, has eased anxieties and helped them build vital connections during this important time. Initiatives like pre-loved sales and food bank donations not only promoted "connection and giving" but also provided a platform for students to develop their leadership skills. The Wellbeing Ambassadors, a student-led team, have taken an active role in organising these events. A recent ISI inspection highlighted our success in promoting wellbeing. Inspectors noted that students are not only well-informed about mental health issues but also felt empowered to make positive choices for their GCSE options.

Quotes from our most recent ISI Inspection:

"Wellbeing Ambassadors demonstrate through their actions and plans the promotion and support of wellbeing in the school community. Pupils appreciate the need for exercise and hugely enjoy many interactive activities in the curriculum, at lunch times and in extracurricular sessions."

"Pupils are well informed about issues relating to their well-being and believe this enables them to make good choices for GCSE options."

"Pupils understand the importance of physical and emotional health and well-being, and this contributes to their success in gaining the highest possible grades... pupils spoke enthusiastically about body image, social media, mental health and mindfulness sessions."

NEXT STEPS

To review all the strategies put in place and measure their immediate impact through effective data collection and by listening to the different members of the school community.

Useful link:

https://read.bookcreator.com/8M6GD9c3uCsujf_UhQWW6CpO02LLxZkxeGxZjST5wVvk/nRIGylR8Stm1DtOIKqWn7w

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