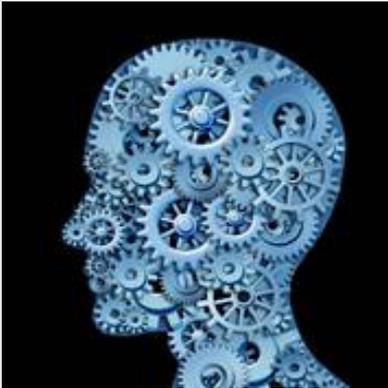


One Trust : One Team

The Newsletter of the Aquinas Church of England Education Trust

**Special
Edition**



**Mind
Matters**



Welcome to the latest special edition of our Aquinas One Trust : One Team Newsletter, *Mind matters*.

As we continue to welcome pupils and prepare for the possibilities of what our return to school will look like in September we understand the demands, uncertainty and impact on each of you in making this happen. Words of ‘thank you’ aren’t enough to express what each of you have achieved and the dedication you have shown to your profession, the Trust, each other and to our young people and families.

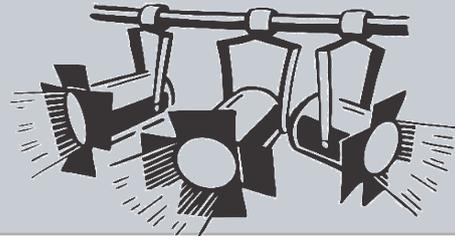
In my new role as Primary Education Director, I have been given lead responsibility across the Trust for Education Policies, Wellbeing, Equality, Inclusion and Diversity. In addition, for our primary academies, I have responsibility for Curriculum, Quality Assurance/Standards and Integrated Curriculum Financial Planning (ICFP). Through each of these, I will support and advise in order to make a positive difference and impact to fulfil our Trust vision and values underpinned by Life –Transforming - Learning.

I hope you all have a well-deserved Summer when we get there and please do take care of yourselves.

Stay safe and well.

Jenni Richards
Primary Education Director

Spotlight on... Wellbeing



Dear All,

As a Trust, we recognise and have always actively supported mental health and emotional well-being, ensuring the core Aquinas Vision of striving towards life in all its fullness. We have many examples of excellent practice in our schools which support and promote the wellbeing of pupils and staff. It is important that wellbeing becomes a priority for us all and that we build a culture of wellbeing throughout our Trust which is embedded, valued and lived out every day.

We are currently working with a representative group, as well as wellbeing leads and leaders across the Trust, to develop and implement a wellbeing and mental health strategy and action plan. The ambitions we have and the purpose of this document are detailed below; once the strategy and action plan have been finalised they will be shared with you. Relevant resources are already available via a dedicated area on BlueSky.

Our Ambitions

We have identified three broad ambitions reflecting the three groups of people with whom we come into contact: our colleagues, our pupils and the wider community. These ambitions will underpin our vision and be reflected in our annual work programmes.

- Every employee will be supported to improve their health and wellbeing. They will also be encouraged to act as a role model to their colleagues and the broader community.
- Every pupil will receive the promotion of health and wellbeing.
- We anticipate the wider community will benefit through our involvement in the countrywide health and wellbeing agenda.

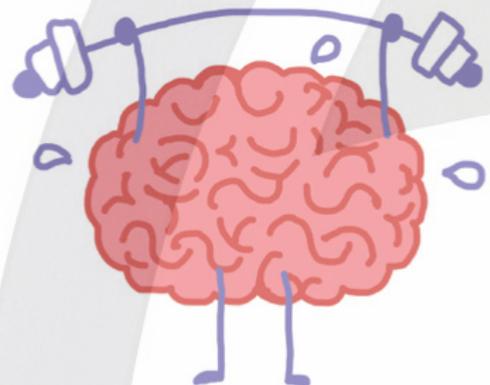
Purpose

Our objective is to develop a highly skilled, motivated and engaged workforce, which continually strives to improve pupil care and Trust performance.

Additionally, we will be looking at any cross-Trust training needs. You will also be informed of the name of your in-school wellbeing lead. They will be your regular point of contact, so please feel free to share information, resources and training ideas with them. However, please do not hesitate to contact me directly if needed at: jenni.richards@aquinatrust.org

Jenni Richards
Primary Education Director
Wellbeing

Are you interested in training to become a Mental Health First Aider? If so, please contact your Headteacher to express your interest.





Anxiety is a normal and often healthy emotion. However, when a person regularly feels a disproportionate level of anxiety, then it can have an adverse effect. With our current pandemic this is one of the greatest concerns.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) tracks wellbeing through a survey of around 1,500 people. The survey asks people how anxious and happy they are on a scale of 1 to 10. Between 20th and 30th of March, the proportion of people registering high levels of anxiety (between 6 and 10 on the scale) stood at 49.6% of the adult population. This is more than 25 million people and shows that anxiety levels are up from 21% at the end of 2019.

You will all have a varying degree of concerns and possible anxieties whilst returning to work and within your families and households but, despite these concerns, there is a wealth of information to help you, one of which is detailed below:

RAIN

Quell Anxiety, Calm Emotions with This Mindfulness Strategy

At its core, reducing the effects of mental illness on your life and determining ways to live well in spite of it is a long-term approach and a gradual, steady process. However, you can do things to manage any mental illness, personality disorder, or life stress in the moment when your struggle is intense. Using proven techniques, you can drastically reduce your anxiety or calm your emotions and become quickly centred and better able to deal with your situation on the spot.

One such well-established and credible approach is a mindfulness strategy called RAIN. RAIN was developed by Michele McDonald, an international insight meditation teacher, and it is used by mindfulness leader Tara Brach in her teachings.

When you are stuck in anxiety or other strong, negative thoughts and emotions, pause, take a slow deep breath, and let it RAIN:

- **R**ecognize your emotions
- **A**llow or accept them to exist without fighting with them
- **I**nvestigate without judging or berating yourself; with openness, ask what is happening in the moment that is causing your strong reaction
- **N**atural awareness through mindfulness lets you use your senses (not your thoughts and emotions) to be present in just the moment and relax

RAIN is cleansing. It lets you pause and reset, quieting your thoughts and emotions in each moment.

**Feeling Overwhelmed?
Remember "RAIN"**

Four steps to stop being so hard on ourselves.

R	A	I	N
Recognize what's going on	Allow the experience to be there, just as it is	Investigate with kindness	Natural awareness, which comes from not identifying with the experience