

Mind, body and soul: Wellbeing at Millfield

Acting Deputy Head (Pastoral), Andy Collins, explains his goal to create a holistic, all-encompassing Wellbeing programme that encourages pupils to be self-aware and get out of their comfort zone.



Pupil wellbeing has never been more of a hot topic. Reports from the Royal Society for Public Health state that social media is linked with increased rates of anxiety, depression and poor sleep. And, with almost half of parents responding to a survey by TES and Mumsnet that their children were worrying about their future, it is no wonder that young people are seeking guidance and solace more than ever before.

Here at Millfield, our Wellbeing programme is meeting this need from a pupil's very first steps onto campus, with a goal to enhance skills that nurture their self-awareness, empathy and resilience through an all-encompassing approach. We want to create a safe, yet challenging environment that allows individuals to fail and grow without fear.

Utilising this risk-taking framework, which is inspired by leading child psychologists like Professor Tanya Byron, arguably places Millfield at the forefront of wellbeing provision in independent boarding and indeed, the secondary education sectors.

We are investing in the future of our pupils by growing our pastoral team, and further training and educating our boarding and day house teams, most of which work in various capacities within the school as teachers, coaches and on-site non-teaching staff. Having our pastoral team integrated in every aspect of the school helps to continue to connect them to the wider teaching body, to ensure that each individual pupil is known and supported, as they would be at home.

We are very lucky to have a number of provisions in place to further support our young people. Over the past few years, the Millfield Institute of Sport and Wellbeing has provided a phenomenal lead in developing support for the physical health and wellbeing of our pupils. This, coupled with the nutritional assistance provided by our in-school nutritionist and the balanced dietary offer of our caterers, Chartwells, creates an understanding of how we have such a physically healthy pupil body.

Our Positive Education and PSHEE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education) programme is also integral, delivering a comprehensive, age-specific curriculum across all year groups, which is designed to equip our pupils with the skills and knowledge to deal with life beyond school. Bringing in external speakers for these sessions, such as the award-winning mental health advocate Juliette Burton, has resulted in pupil-led feedback and a pilot roll-out of a Peer Support programme this year.

Pupils can also seek guidance from the Chaplaincy, led by Reverend Philip Harbridge, who is able to act as a sounding board and offer answers to some of the more complex questions our young people have.

It is my firm belief that academic performance and adolescent wellbeing are synergistic; one cannot flourish without the other. At Millfield, we not only teach pupils academic and cognitive skills, we also encourage them to listen to their bodies and challenge thoughts which are not positive, so that they can manage their own physical and mental health as they take those all-important first steps after leaving school.



**Amanda Kinch,
Tutor in charge
of Nutrition for
Wellbeing**

"For many pupils, this is their first experience of being away from home and having to make independent choices about food. Coupled with that, some have also never experienced European cuisine before.

"As a teacher and on-site nutritionist with over 15 years of experience at Millfield, I am aware of the challenges pupils face when making food choices – social media is a great influencer, with many pupils feeling pressure to eat and look a certain way.

"To me, food is medicine: I am here to support and guide pupils to listen to their bodies and to make healthy, well-informed choices that enable them to grow and develop whilst coping with the demands of their academic work and sports commitments. Food is the vital fuel our body needs."



**Philip Harbridge,
Chaplain**

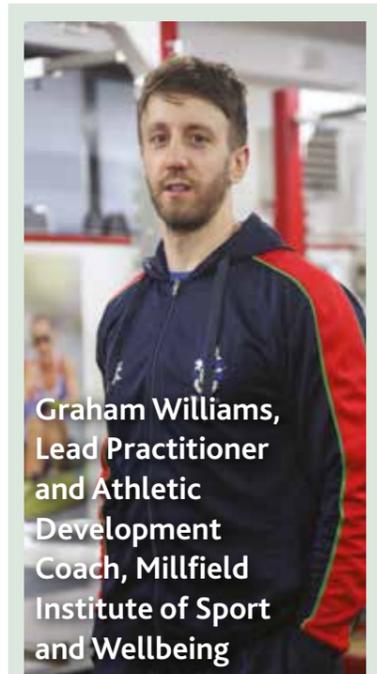
"With so many different cultures, faiths and backgrounds and with many pupils adjusting to boarding life, I try to focus on what we all have in common. My goal is to help pupils explore a sense of wholeness and peace, or 'shalom', so that in the Millfield family they may grow more at one with themselves and each other and their world, without losing the desire to challenge injustice wherever they encounter it. I have found in my 20 years of experience, both as a College Chaplain at the University of Cambridge and here at Millfield, that adolescent angst tends to be fairly constant. Recourse to social media undoubtedly deepens anxiety, but the basic questions that eat us up – 'who am I' and 'where do I fit in' – are intrinsically unchanged. As Chaplain, I provide assurance and guidance with regular services, house chapels and personal visits to the chapel."

"The PSHEE programme has never been more relevant to our young people, as society becomes increasingly aware of social wellbeing and mental health. It is a chance for pupils to discuss a wide range of topics that affect them every day, such as current events, moral decisions, democracy and cultural values.

"These lessons help pupils to manage many of the critical challenges and responsibilities they will face growing up. The programme is enhanced with visiting speakers and academics who widen our pupils' understanding of the world. From these talks, we have had a number of pupils come forward with ideas for peer support within the school."



**Kelly Lindsell – Tutor
in charge of Millfield's
Positive Education and
PSHEE programme**



**Graham Williams,
Lead Practitioner
and Athletic
Development
Coach, Millfield
Institute of Sport
and Wellbeing**

"Sport is therapeutic; it is a way for pupils to be sociable and stay fit and healthy. The Institute is here to support pupils in reaching their full potential and embracing experiences in sport, like recovering from injury, as well as resilience.

"But, with so much opportunity at Millfield, it can be overwhelming for pupils to take it all in. We believe the wide ranging development of young people in sport goes beyond winning, and Millfield's sporting values provide a fantastic backdrop to enhance pupil wellbeing. I am currently adding to my knowledge in this area by studying for a professional doctorate in Talent Development. I plan to apply my research to help further support pupils to embrace the learning opportunities that are available to them at Millfield."

**MILLFIELD
WELLBEING
BY NUMBERS**

4 dedicated safeguarding leads

24 hour medical provision

2 on-site counsellors (adolescent psychotherapists)

1 school sports psychologist

4 timetabled PSHEE lessons every month

1 experienced on-site nutritionist

20 years: school Chaplain's experience