



# Backwell School

An Ofsted Outstanding School  
A National Teaching School

Station Road, Backwell,  
Bristol BS48 3BX  
Tel: 01275 463371  
mailbox@backwellschool.net  
www.backwellschool.net

Headteacher: Jon Nunes MA

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Dear Parent/Carer

## **RunWell**

We are writing to make you aware of a six-week programme that all Year 7 students are about to undertake during terms 5 and 6. The programme, called RunWell, aims to educate students on the benefits that running (and exercise in general) can have on mental health.

Our aim is to get every student in Year 7 to run continuously for 20 minutes, through a structured six-week programme of (ideally) three runs per week, progressing from running for a minute at a time to eventually running for 20 minutes. The programme will take place outside of Physical Education lessons, in coached sessions led by teachers during two of the students' classroom lessons each week. They will also be asked to complete a run outside of school.

The programme will culminate in an event, towards the end of term 6, whereby all Year 7 students will be taken off timetable for an afternoon to run together for 20 minutes, along with some members of staff.

It is very important that you are aware that the pace and distance covered is not important during this whole process. The event will be arranged so that the students run laps of the field, starting at different points. It will never be obvious who has run the furthest or shortest distance.

We believe that every student is capable of taking part in this programme. The aim is that, by the end of term 6, students are aware of not only the obvious physical benefits of running and exercise, but also the positive impact it can have on mental health. With an increasing number of young people struggling with mental health issues as they grow older, and trying to cope with the academic and social pressures of being a teenager, we are aiming to provide them with some tools and ideas of ways to manage the stress that many will, at times, experience over the coming years.

Running is an activity that everyone is able to do at their own pace and, although some may want to set themselves goals and complete park runs or other events, many enjoy running simply for the headspace it gives them. We are not aiming to create world record breakers; we are trying to educate students on the hugely positive effects of time outside and away from schoolwork and getting the body moving. In conjunction with the RunWell programme, we will hold assemblies and tutor time sessions to discuss all the above to ensure the students know this is not just about running, but also about mental health and physical wellbeing.

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The first task we have for the students, however, is for them to take and submit a 'running selfie'. We would like every student to submit a photo of themselves running in some form over the Easter holidays, and would love to see a variety of pictures; some examples might be running around a playground with a younger sibling/cousin, running while walking a dog, on holiday or playing sport. They might be running alone or with family members or friends. We don't mind what form it takes; we would just like the students to start thinking and talking about running! We will be awarding small prizes for each tutor group and displaying some of the photos so that the students can encourage each other and make them aware of the versatility of running.

We hope that every student will be able to complete the whole year group run in July, but we are also aware that some students may find this difficult – physically or motivationally. We hope that you will be able to support your child at home and encourage them to get out and run one or two evenings a week or at the weekend, either with a friend or with a family member; it would be great if parents, relatives and older siblings joined in as well!

In due course, we will provide further details of the dates when your child will need to bring their running kit to school. Hopefully, you will hear positive reports from your child as they progress through the programme. We are very excited to get started and hope that Year 7 students enjoy the process!

If you would like to read more about the links between running and mental health, please visit the following websites:

<https://www.cigna.com/individuals-families/health-wellness/mental-health-benefits-of-running>  
<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/the-running-blog/2016/apr/19/running-good-for-mental-health-england-athletics-ambassador-mind>  
<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/parentsandyoungpeople/youngpeople/exerciseandmentalhealth.aspx>

Thank you in advance for your support.

Yours sincerely

Anna Randall and Leanne Vincent-Norgate  
RunWell Coordinators