



Backwell School

An Ofsted Outstanding School
A National Teaching School

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Dear Parent/Carer

Runwell 2019

We recently wrote to you to make you aware of the Runwell programme, taking all Year 7 students through a structured six-week programme of three runs per week, progressing from running for a minute at a time to eventually running for 20 minutes continuously. The students have already begun discussing, through tutor led sessions, factors that may affect their mental health over the coming years, and how to make themselves more resilient. Over the next few weeks we will also be looking at the benefits of taking care of your physical health through exercise and nutrition and the effect it can have on your mental health.

We have been extremely encouraged by the positive response that the Year 7 students have already shown towards the Runwell programme and we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the support you have also shown, by encouraging their runs, running with them and emailing in their 'super-selfies' for them.

The final 20 minute running event will be held on **Monday 8 July** and the students will have activities throughout the day designed specifically to allow them the opportunity to reflect on their tremendous effort over the programme, including, a Year 7 tutor time porridge buffet, celebration of their achievements, a 'running' themed lunch in the Year 7 dining room and a mass warm-up before the final event.

We are also very excited to announce that we will have Ben Smith, the CEO and Founder of the 401 Foundation, joining us on the final day to speak to the students. **The 401 Foundation was set up in 2014, after Ben's 401 Challenge saw him run 401 marathons in 401 days all around the UK with an aim to raise £250,000 for two anti-bullying charities. Following several years of struggling with his own mental health due to bullying at school Ben aimed to inspire people, challenge them to do things they never thought they could do and also raise the awareness of the harmful effects bullying can have on your confidence, self-esteem and mental health.**

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.

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Our RunWell programme is designed to incorporate three runs a week for the Year 7 students; two of these will be during lesson times and one they will complete as a piece of home learning. It is important that we stress that during these runs, the students will be expected to join in as if it were a PE lesson and the school behaviour policy will be followed for any refusal of participation.

The students had an extra assembly on Wednesday 8 May to explain the logistics of the programme. We will have spare trainers and kit available from PE should any student forget their kit on the day of their run, and if any students miss a run due to absence they will be able to join a lunchtime run that will be put on for other year groups, who are being offered the opportunity to complete the Runwell program at lunchtimes. These will be on a Monday and Thursday lunchtime.

The days the students will be completing their lesson time runs are as follows:

Mendip & Cotswold: Every Tuesday and Thursday

Quantocks & Sedgemoor: Every Monday and Wednesday

If you could help them to remember to bring their kit on these days as well as their timetabled PE lesson days we would really appreciate it.

In order to complete the training in time for the final event we will be running according to the schedule and in all weathers. Therefore, we suggest that the students are prepared to bring in sun-cream, extra water and a hat for particularly sunny days, and a lightweight rain jacket and change of underwear for wet days. We will not run if there is a health and safety concern due to the weather.

It is very important to remind you, and the students, that the pace and distance covered is not important during this whole programme and we are not recording any of these figures. This means that the process is inclusive for all students, no matter what their perceived ability or starting level of fitness.

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

- <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