



BEECHEN CLIFF

Submission to Education Select Committee: The impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This submission describes our school's journey over the last two years to a point where the mental health provision was described as "remarkable" in its most recent Ofsted inspection (of the Boarding provision in March 2020). This report can be found below:

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50150011>

- 1.2. Student leadership, staff engagement, partnership with local mental health organisations and an unwavering vision to improve the well-being of our pupils have been critical factors in bringing about a culture which is recognised by the wider school community.
- 1.3. The school's journey has also been charted in a video made by the local mental health alliance, Boys in Mind (Girls Mind Too) which challenges stigma around mental health and aims to reduce male suicide. Sponsored by a school in Northern Ireland which tragically lost a pupil to suicide earlier this year, the video shares our journey in a form that might encourage and help other schools to raise the profile of mental health:

<https://boysinmind.co.uk/whole-school-approach/>

- 1.4. This video led to the school being featured on BBC Points West on Thursday 16th July and it is being used by the Boarding Schools Association (BSA) and the International Boys School Coalition (IBSC) as part of their offer to schools to promote dialogue about mental health this summer.
- 1.5. Whilst the school recognises the challenges presented by Covid-19, it has used the pandemic to catalyse the next stage of its mental health strategy. As you will read below, this strategy has had a significant impact on pupils across the

school, with strong connections to the school's work on equalities. A recent evaluation of the school's work on mental health, led by students at the school, best encapsulates the impact our approach has had:

"The progress that students have made towards an open and non judgemental environment for mental health has been truly remarkable, and many of my friends have reflected on how much of a positive difference such an environment has made to their experience of Beechen Cliff. It's been so empowering to take part in things such as the mental health team as well as delivering testimonies in assemblies, and it has not only strengthened us as individuals, but made us all closer together, bringing in those that perhaps previously may have felt alone in their struggles. The steps we have taken towards equality for all, especially in the case of the Beechen Cliff LGBTQIA+ community, has again been unbelievable, and it has also brought those who would traditionally be in the most marginalised groups utterly and completely into Beechen Cliff's caring community. It gives me great pride to be one of the students that helped to shape the environment surrounding mental health and equalities at Beechen Cliff, and I have no doubt that students will continue to play a big part in Beechen Cliff's journey for years to come." **Will, Year 13 Student and Mental Health Ambassador.**

- 1.6. This submission tells you our journey right up to the days prior to the deadline for this submission. It includes evaluation data from a pilot approach we ran to supporting pupils, parents and the school community in the Covid-19 pandemic. The results from this evaluation have shaped our strategy for September and beyond, to ensure that our community can move forward together and that, in years to come, we will look back at lockdown as something that, **whilst challenging, also brought good to us all.**

We hope you find this submission useful.

The Beechen Cliff Mental Health Team

2. Our History of Mental Health Work

- 2.1. Beechen Cliff is a large state school with a small boarding provision, situated in the centre of Bath. The school is a boys-only school for 930 pupils in Years 7-11 and has a mixed gender Sixth Form of 380. The school's vision is that its pupils and students go on to lead happy and healthy lives, thriving as individuals and making a positive contribution to society. Heavily-oversubscribed, its core values

of aspiration, compassion, independence, balance, respect and integrity genuinely underpin all that it does.

- 2.2. We initially wanted to improve mental health outcomes for students in the Sixth Form since it was recognised that many were struggling but few were seeking support, especially for early intervention work. This was especially true of boys in the school due to the stigma attached to male mental health. We wanted to build upon what we had been running through PSHE and tutor time activities and then extend our Sixth Form work to the lower school. Our aim was therefore to ensure that everybody was comfortable asking for help, regardless of their gender identity or age.

“The mental health strategy has had a remarkable effect on making people realise that they’re not alone.” **Andrew Davies, Headteacher**

- 2.3. Our first step, in Summer 2018, was to assemble a team of Sixth Form Mental Health ambassadors who wanted to make positive changes, in some cases because of their own experiences. When we asked these student ambassadors why they felt their peers were so reluctant to seek help, they thought it was because it is always the school staff who led assemblies signposting students for support. They proposed that students would be far more likely to listen to their peers; and so the idea of a testimony-led Mental Health assembly was born. In September 2018, Sixth Form students delivered two one-hour assemblies to the Lower and Upper Sixth, with interactive elements and the **Boys in Mind (Girls Mind Too)** film, ‘A letter to my younger self’. <http://boysinmind.co.uk/ltnmys/>
- 2.4. It was the final section of the assembly, anonymous testimonies from teachers and Sixth Form students, which had the most impact. The final five testimonies were personal accounts of the experiences of the Sixth Form student mental health ambassadors. These assemblies and work of the Mental Health Team had an electrifying impact on students’ willingness to speak up about mental health. Comments after the assemblies included the following:

“So many people struggle with their mental health but it is unfortunately still a bit of a taboo subject. It was very clear that the mental health assembly helped to break the stigma and it encouraged people to start talking.” **Anna, Former Sixth Form Student**

'I understood the value of being able to ask for support when it is needed. The effect of the testimony assembly was truly transformative, and many more students were comfortable doing just that. This was especially true of male students — our work had a greater impact than we could ever have hoped for.' **Gabe - Former Sixth Form Student, Mental Health Ambassador (currently studying at Oxford University) and a Boys in Mind Youth advisor**

The Mental Health Team's work has made huge steps in making people feel safe and accepted in the Sixth Form." **Will - Year 13 Student and Boys in Mind Youth Advisor**

- 2.5. The impact of the assemblies was reflected in some powerful statistics gathered during evaluation in the weeks and months that followed. The most notable figures were: the 211% increase in boys seeking help for the mental health (see Table 1 below), 100% of students said the personal testimonies in the assemblies had the biggest impact on them, before the assembly, only 43% would have sought help; after the assembly 74% of boys would be likely or extremely likely to seek help.
- 2.6. The assemblies also prompted dialogue about how students could help each other, as can be seen in this statement from a Lower Sixth girl:

"...we want to also help educate girls and women how to be there and help their friends and boyfriends when they are struggling but without taking it all on themselves. It is important for us to learn how best to help the men we come in contact with and keep them safe. The main message the girls mind too aspect is trying to tackle is girls taking too many of their friends issues on themselves and knowing when to get professional help as it can be detrimental to their mental health and cause more issues when they are only trying to help their friend or boyfriend' **Enya, Lower Sixth student and Boys in Mind Youth Advisor**

No. Sixth Form students seeking help	Girls	Boys	Total
2017-18	35	17	52
2018-19	44	53	97
2019-20	39	77	116

Table 1: survey data from assembly evaluations - increase in cases by gender

2.7. If we look at the continued progress data over 3 years from 2017-18 to 2019-20, we can see that repeating the testimony assemblies has have an even greater impact on the Sixth Form community (see Table 2 below): There has been a 352% increase in Sixth Form boys seeking help since 2017-18, the girls were always far more willing to ask for help, but even girls seeking support has increased by 29% since 2017-18 and tn total, we have experienced a 135% increase in Sixth Form students seeking support in this 3 year time period.

Year on Year % increase in cases	Boys	Girls	Total
2017-18 to 2018-19	211%	26%	87%
2018-19 to 2019-20	45%	2%	31%
<i>Increase in 3 years from 2017-18 to 2019-20</i>	352%	29%	135%

Table 2: Survey data - % caseload increase Yr on Yr - by gender

2.8. If we look at the actual numbers of students on roll in the Sixth Form by gender, we can also measure the impact of the testimony assemblies on student numbers seeking support. continued over the 3 years from 2017-18 to 2019-20. (see Table 3 below): In 2017-18 just 6% of the boys were seeking support. In 2019-20, the percentage of boys on roll seeking help has risen sharply to 27%. The girls were always more willing to seek support, but over the same 3 year time period, the actual percentage of girls getting help has increased from 31% to 39%. In 2017-18, only 13% of our Sixth Form students were comfortable seeking help, with a greater proportion of girls than boys. In 2019-20, 27% of boys and 39% of girls accessed support. In total, 30% of Sixth Form students asked for support. Government statistics suggest that 1 in 4 teenagers will experience mental health concerns. These statistics suggest that we are meeting our students needs and that this number may indeed be even higher than the current government statistics suggest.

Year on Year % of actual Sixth Form students on roll seeking support	Boys	Girls	Total
2017-18	6%	31%	13%
2018-19	20%	36%	25%
2019-20	27%	39%	30%

Table 3: Survey data - expressed as % of actual numbers of students in Sixth Form seeking support - Yr on Yr by gender

- 2.9. To respond to the increased demand, the school employed dedicated Sixth Form counsellors and invested in training the Sixth Form Pastoral Manager to offer Solution Focused approaches (see Box 1 below). This was not only necessary to cope with the greater number of boys coming forward, but also the girls; whilst girls had historically been better at speaking up, the assemblies had an effect on **all students**. So impressed by this positive method of conversations and the positive results, the staff mental Health champions organised for staff volunteers to also have foundation or extended level training in Solution Focused Practice techniques in the summer of 2019. These staff now wear the special mental health lanyards that make them easily identifiable to students.

Solution Focused Approach

Solution Focused was developed in the 1980's in Milwaukee in America. The approach was developed as a model of therapy; however, it is now widely applied across, health, social care and educational settings. It can be applied in any setting, whether it be in an organisation, a community, groups, families, parenting, as well as for individuals. The SF approach places people as experts in their own lives; with the strengths and resources to reach their own solutions. The approach works with people to enable them to have a clear vision of how they want their life to be and how they would like things to be different; what their best hopes are for the future. For more information, go to:

www.solutionrevolution.co.uk

www.ukasfp.org

Box 1: Solution Focused Approaches

- 2.10. With the obvious impact of greater emphasis being placed on mental health and the power of the mechanisms described above for increasing conversation about the subject, improving mental health become one of Beechen Cliff's strategic goals in 2019-20, with the following aim:

To create a culture of openness about mental health, encouraging everyone to talk about feelings, listen to one another and promote their ability to bring about change for the better.

- 2.11. Our aim was to put student leadership at the centre of the strategy, to build capacity in staff and to use the personal testimony approach that clearly had had such a powerful effect on students. Accordingly, over the last year, 60 staff members volunteered to train to become mental health ambassadors. Staff had said they wanted to have the skills to have conversations with students who approach them about their difficulties with mental health or wellbeing and, above all, to feel more confident to do so.
- 2.12. As well as staff having Solution Focused Training, One of the Boys in Mind team advisor's and Solution Focused Trainer trainer, Tara Gretton www.solutionrevolution.co.uk, has trained our Sixth Form Pastoral Manager to help her cope with the increased number of Sixth Form students seeking support after the assemblies. This year, and during lockdown, Tara has trained the Sixth Form students who form the Mental Health Team in Solution Focused techniques and her next plan is to train these Senior students to train younger students in the school on how to have Solution Focused conversations with each other, thus embracing our aims to make our mental health work even more student-led.
- 2.13. One of our Sixth Form students and Boys in Mind advisors, Will Reed, has had this training by Tara Gretton and has written a blog for the UKASFP (UK Association for Solution Focused Practice) about using Solution Focused Practice in lockdown and about being trained in SF. Here is the link:

https://www.google.com/url?q=https://ukasfp.org/page/SolNews?fbclid%3DlWAR3ohgYsT38TDRIAafsabGem7MNom_CKBoHMWX5F6G-YDYzhftaJN1Tb2PQ&sa=D&ust=1592474604434000&usg=AFQjCNGvGFibu1Qf_CZM4WDF2BcsO8UD-A

- 2.14. In addition to Solution Focused training, staff and students, anyone visiting Beechen Cliff would notice the importance we place on mental wellbeing. Posters are up on all the major notice boards and on the back of toilet doors around the school promoting external support services available to students, including:

Boys in Mind - www.boysinmind.co.uk

Kooth (a confidential and anonymous online counselling tool with trained CAMHS advisors) www.kooth.com

Off The Record counsellors who work in our school supporting students offering counselling or talking therapy. www.offtherecord-banes.co.uk

Mentoring Plus - also works in our school supporting young people facing challenges and connecting them with their community through award winning mentoring schemes, youth clubs and other inspiring project www.mentoringplus.net

CAHMS - www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs

On Your Mind - **Website:** www.onyourmind.org **Childline Website:** www.childline.org.uk

The Mix Website: www.themix.org.uk

Young Minds Website: www.youngminds.org.uk

Papyrus Website: www.papyrus-uk.org

My Mind Website: www.mymind.org.uk

Calm: Website: www.thecalmzone.net/

Rethink Website: <https://www.rethink.org/home>

Epic Friends Website: www.epicfriends.co.uk/answering

Frank Website: <https://www.talktofrank.com/>

- 2.15. The assemblies, which have become the headline events for our strategy, have continued to be complemented by a range of other mental health work, for example through timetabled PSHE lessons, tutor time activities and the work that the ETeam (Equalities) does. Tutors, Heads of House and other pastoral and safeguarding staff have developed an acute awareness of signs of mental health difficulties and a range of tools such as the NHS Harmless assessment are used. Close liaison with NHS services such as the school nursing service, CAMHS and GPs has also been important.
- 2.16. Our mental health approaches were tested under tragic circumstances in October 2019 when one of our Year 11 pupils died on a school visit to Spain. This event rocked the school community and required an extensive response to support pupils, parents and staff who were deeply affected. The school's approach received over 250 written messages of thanks from parents and feedback from external organisations including, the former PSHE lead for Bath & North East Somerset, who said:

"I feel Beechen Cliff's response to the tragedy was exemplary...Staff and parents were provided with information about how best to support students . All of this was extremely efficiently and sensitively handled..."

Kate Murphy

- 2.17. At the heart of the school's response was allowing young people and staff to express how they felt. Pupils were given space to cry and the images of large

groups of 16-year old boys hugging one another in tears will remain with us all forever. Fortunately the school had written a post-suicide response plan some months earlier and this was easily adapted for use in situation. A coordinated response over the week following the incident, enabling pupils to step out of lessons, to be together, to talk to counsellors and educational psychologists, to keep parents informed and most of all to listen to one another, meant that the young people in the school were able to cope as best they could with the loss of their friend and peer.

- 2.18. There is no doubt in our minds that the culture of openness about mental health developed in the school leading up the tragic incident contributed to helping all involved cope with it. It furthermore reinforced the importance of ensuring that mental health should be at the heart of the school's work for realising its aspiration for pupils. In February 2020, we repeated our testimony assembly in the Sixth Form and extended it to the lower school. Just the same as in the Sixth Form, the lower school assemblies had a powerful impact. A particularly exciting feature was that Year 7 pupils helped lead the assemblies, alongside Sixth Formers who had been in the audience a year ago; as such, the student leadership aspect has been demonstrated to be sustainable.
- 2.19. Much like in the Sixth Form the lower school assemblies saw an increase in demand and greater openness about mental health. In particular, we saw more pupils sharing concerns about their friends. Another noticeable change in the Sixth Form this time round was one student talking openly about his sexual identity and how this had impacted his mental health. He explained that the culture of openness created by the student-led approach to mental health at Beechen Cliff, had helped him to come out as gay and to have the confidence to talk to his peers about his experience. Students openly talking about their sexual identity was a knock-on effect of the student-led mental health work on equalities:

“For me as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, I can’t really stress how much the more open accepting environment has allowed me to grow and become my authentic self and as a result, take a massive strain off my mental health. I know I speak for a lot of my friends and it is really empowering to have so many around you who love you no matter what, and I’ve seen so many of my friends feeling so so much better in their heads after they have been able to come out”

“.....Receiving feedback from a year 8 about how much me delivering my testimony in coming out as gay has helped him really hit me and made me so proud that I’ve built up the strength to do something like this, mainly from the support of those around me in Beechen Cliff. To hear that really felt like validation, and was so beneficial for my mental health, and I know I want to go on to inspire others to be themselves so they don’t have to go through the struggles that I did around sexuality.” **Will, Year 13 Student and Boys in Mind Youth Advisor**

- 2.20. As mentioned above, our work on mental health has also tied closely with our strategy on equalities. Over the last 2 years, the school has developed a stronger culture of respect for difference and diversity which is benefitting all our young people. This is particularly important for ensuring good mental health for those who fall into one of the protected characteristic groups under the Equality Act 2010 as, across society, those who do not feel part of the 'mainstream' are often more prone to struggling with their mental health. For example; a 2018 Stonewall report stated that,

“In the last year alone, half of LGBT people have experienced depression and three in five have suffered from anxiety, far exceeding estimates for the general population. And our findings show that poor mental health is also higher among LGBT people who are young, Black, Asian or minority ethnic, disabled or from a socio-economically deprived background.”

- 2.21. Alongside raising the profile of Mental Health, the school has put in place a programme that explores and promotes the Equality Act 2010, with a termly focus covering all protected characteristics over the course of a year. Through assemblies, PSHE and tutor time, pupils have been challenged and encouraged in their thinking about what equality means, what constitutes discrimination and how they can make a difference. Our annual summer sports day saw the Pride Flag flying above the school and extensive wearing of rainbow laces; there was heavy participation in “Show Racism the Red Card” day and International Women’s Day was championed; these are but a few example of the profile the school has given to this important aspect of young people’s education.
- 2.22. Dovetailing our mental health work, our approach has been to promote that advocated by those who campaign for all groups recognised by the Equality Act, namely that everyone in society needs to play a role in bringing about change: for instance, men to be part of the conversation about women’s rights, in part because men face gender stereotypes too, particularly around expressing emotion. This represents a further strong link to our mental health work. In the same way, we want everyone in the school to think about what their part can be in helping others who feel different, be it on account of their sexual orientation, religion, gender or mental health. We have seen a greater number of pupils approaching staff to share concerns about their friends, as well as many more self-reporting mental health difficulties. Equally, we have seen more and more students being confident to talk about their sexual orientation or gender identity. This has undoubtedly impacted positively on their wellbeing.

- 2.23. The school's approach to respecting others was encapsulated in December 2019 in a 'Pledge of Respect', a visual display in the school of some 1200 signature of pupils, staff, governors, parent representatives and partners such sports organisations, the Police and community groups, set around a set of beliefs and principles. This commitment to respecting difference, tying it to the school's core values, can be found physically located at the heart of the school. What is all the more exciting is that students and pupils wrote the Pledge document and shared it with their peers through assemblies and a ceremonial unveiling. Like our work with Boys in Mind (Girls Mind Too), student leadership is central to young people believing in, and taking ownership of, these issues as part of joining and making a contribution to a more tolerant and respectful society.
- 2.24. Student Leadership has also been critical to evaluating the impact. Box 2 below is a summary of a document produced by Beechen Cliff students who are on the mental health team and Boys in Mind Youth Advisors.. Will, in Year 13, coordinated this student evaluation by working closely with Daniel in year 7 and asked other students what sort of impact the student mental health work has had on them.

What do our students say about the mentally healthy environment at Beechen Cliff?

This is feedback from students across the school about what has helped them to open up / seek support / feel more comfortable with who they are. Quotes are from members of the student mental health team.

Student Leadership

Having a student lead for mental health. Having a student-led mental health team. Having assemblies mainly run by students. Assemblies are also fantastic in allowing students to tell their stories, which is also cathartic for those that do.

"Student Leadership has definitely been the biggest driver of progress without a doubt, and we feel that our voice is heard, whereas all too often adults are dictating what to do on issues affecting us."

Genuine interest and support from the School Leadership Team and other staff

This is evident throughout, with the whole of SLT eager to provide opportunities to develop and support work on mental health in partnership with students; and the mental health team has learnt that the headteacher was the first one to volunteer for this training, showing that passion for improving mental health at Beechen Cliff truly comes from the top. Tutors are also very supportive and approachable, whether that be in Lower or Upper School.

Around the start of Beechen Cliff's journey, members of staff were inspiring role models, submitting anonymous testimonies about their mental health

which were read out in the assemblies, showing that we all struggle, no matter our age.

Over 60 teachers have received Solution Focused training to allow them to listen and speak to students in a more compassionate and positive way.

“Coming from another school where this wasn’t the case, it honestly means everything. It makes getting help or starting a conversation so much easier”

An accepting, open and inclusive environment

This is especially helpful for members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Having school as a place to be themselves in the company of accepting people is empowering, and can make a change from a home environment.

“The inclusive environment in Beechen allowed me and 7 of my friends to come out and comfortably be our most authentic selves.”

Students feeling confident to talk amongst themselves

The building up of an open environment, where it is ok to show vulnerability, really helps with being able to talk to friends if there is an issue, without fear of judgement. Those in the mental health team noted the power of the Solution Focused training, and how it has helped them to have more effective and positive conversations about mental health with each other. Having assemblies run by students from Upper and Lower School promotes integration between the years and allows them to speak to one another more confidently.

“Through the involvement of students across the school in assemblies, sixth formers have engaged with lower school students and everyone has got more confidence!”

Clarity about what mental health and support services are on offer

In addition to mental health posters all around the school, students are often told of all the different support services that are available to them in assemblies, including professional counselling, mentoring and mindful breathing sessions. Being aware of this has many positive effects. It reduces feelings of not knowing what to do in a stressful situation, and it prevents students from being scared to come forward to ask for help. The badges and lanyards of Solution Focused trained staff and students make it easy for a student to know who they can speak to if that feels more comfortable than going to services in school.

“People recognise the badges and lanyards and us [the mental health team] from assemblies, and therefore everyone knows who to go to for support”

The power of film

Films, such as “A letter to my younger self” and other Boys in Mind films have had a huge impact on students in the assemblies. Students from our school are in some of the films and benefited by feeling like they are able to help

others and also have a moment of catharsis by being able to tell their own story. Being involved in films also helps with speaking and listening skills

“Being involved in film projects for Boys in Mind has given me so much more confidence to talk about my own experiences . It has been amazing to see how many more of my friends and other people in the school have opened up after seeing films in assemblies “

Special days/events

The “Wear Green Day for Mental Health Awareness” was specifically good at raising awareness, but other days like “Show Racism the Red Card” and the “Rainbow Laces Campaign” are also helpful to maintain the focus on an open/equal environment. The strength of the community is shown at these times, as it is when we have gone through difficult times as a school, when students have also checked up on their teachers, making sure everyone in the school is supported and emphasising that staff wellbeing is also important.

“The Wear Green Day reminded us that everyone is striving towards positive mental health , which can strangely get forgotten sometimes, as well as showing how easily our strong Beechen community can come together for such a good reason.”

Student Mental Health Team, June 2020

Box 2: Student Mental Health Team evaluation

- 2.25. As we hope is obvious from the story above, the last two years has seen a sea-change in the approaches to mental health in the school, and the development of a culture of openness. As we arrived at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, this could not have been better timed.
3. Mental Health during Covid-19
 - 3.1. The school has embraced the Covid-19 pandemic as an opportunity to further raise the profile of, and take steps to improve, the mental health of young people in the school. It has also been used as a way of engaging more staff in the conversation about mental health at this extraordinary time.
 - 3.2. There have been many stories in the media about concerns over young people’s mental health during lockdown and the potential for a ‘crisis’ on their return to school. The school has therefore developed a strategy to pilot solution focused (SF) approaches to mental health across the whole school, building on the highly positive impact in parts of the school already. The strategy for this 6-week pilot in the summer term is underpinned by SF and Trauma Informed Practice (TiP). At its heart is a shift from a deficit-model of mental health to a strengths-based one, a central tenet of SF.

3.3. In order to run the pilot, a Mental Health Team was formed, comprising students, parents, leadership team, teaching and support staff, and the SF counsellor employed by the School. The Boys in Mind (Girls Mind too) leader also joined the team as a critical friend and to shape the strategy. Building on the school's overall Mental Health goal. The pilot had four specific aims:

- To raise staff awareness and understanding of SF
- To raise pupil and parent awareness of SF
- To trial SF approaches through direct contact with pupils (if possible) and via parents
- To evaluate the impact of promoting SF and use this to inform 2020-21 strategy

3.4. For this period of time, SF will be introduced through 3 key questions:

Using the language of invitation throughout

On a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being you at your best and 0 being the opposite of that, where are you on the scale [since lockdown / this week / today etc]?

What have you noticed about yourself that has pleased you and makes you that number and not lower?

Now you have looked where you are on the scale in relation to being at your best, describe what being at your best would look like for you, and what small sign would tell you that you were moving a small step towards being at your best?

3.5. The intention is that these questions will become common language across all stakeholders, thus raising awareness of SF. The key learning strategy is to make SF *experiential* for all. We are taking a holistic approach that looks at every aspect of pupils' education, community and emotional wellbeing. This will be based on what they have experienced in this period of time and how they hope to support themselves to move through it. Based on this we looked at the following Themes before pupils and students return to school.

History
Community
Emotional health
Connection

3.6. We encouraged parents to explore them with their children and family as we all navigate the impact of this time in our life.

- 3.7. There are two principal mechanisms by which the SF approach was promoted and trialled with pupils, parents and staff: the first was a weekly newsletter to parents with a suggested activity for them to try at home with their child(ren); with all pupils in years 7 to 9 not due to attend school, parents remain the primary vehicle through which we can effect change. For Lower Sixth students, the weekly Sixth Form bulletin contained the same suggested activity. For year 10 pupils, the weekly bulletin activity was complemented by a second SF element during in-school sessions, delivered through wellbeing/PSHE lessons when they were on site.
- 3.8. Staff received weekly information on SF that mirrors that provided to parents and pupils and were encouraged to use it themselves. Training is being made available for all staff who wish to receive it.
- 3.9. A range of evaluation methods were used to measure the impact of the six week programme. This included:
- A staff survey scaling questions, sent out in week 1 and week 6 to measure confidence in the SF approach;
 - A sample group of parents being asked to trial the approach, organised through the PTA;
 - A survey of pupils, parents and staff at the end of the programme;
 - Brief interviews with a sample of Sixth Form students; and
 - A survey of Year 10 pupils through their on-site sessions.
- 3.10. Our best hope was that this pilot would demonstrate the power of the SF approach and that it can be used whole-school. If this was the case, we are planning to build our mental health and wellbeing strategy around the approach for next academic year.
- 3.11. In the last week we have collated the feedback from all stakeholder groups involved in the Covid-19 strategy. Based on surveys and questionnaires of 43 staff, 110 parents and almost 250 pupils and students, our aim of raising awareness was clearly achieved. Most excitingly, over 70% of parents expressed an interest in learning more about how to have SF conversations and 80% of pupils in school felt that having such conversations was a positive experience. This further validates our plans to roll-out SF approaches further across the whole school in September.

4. Mental Health Strategy 2020-21

- 4.1. Looking ahead to next academic year, our strategy will build on all we have accomplished in the last two years. The key strands of this strategy will be:
- Making good mental health and well-being one of our four top strategic outcomes for pupils and students;
 - Sharing the mental health and well-being vision strategy with all stakeholders and engaging them with it;
 - Capturing our mental health provision in a 'Beechen Cliff Mental Health and Well-being Model';
 - Further enhancing our PSHE provision to educate pupils and students on preventative and responsive measures to maintaining good mental health;
 - Repeating and refining our testimony assemblies;
 - Training more staff in solution focused approaches; and
 - Evaluating the impact of our strategy in order to inform next steps.
- 4.2. We want to help younger pupils access support earlier so that they can have the skills to cope with any issues arising at a much younger age. We hope to reduce the number of students needing help as they progress through the school with Senior Mental Health student ambassadors able to train younger students to have Solution Focused conversations with each other.
- 4.3. A further 40 staff have been trained in Solution Focused techniques during Covid-19 lockdown. This will mean half of the teaching and support staff will be trained by the end of 2019/20 academic year. Once trained, these staff members will wear lanyards in a different colour to indicate that they are able to have conversations with pupils and students about mental health – or anything that is bothering them – making them even more approachable. The Sixth Form now has a new Student Mental Health Team that plans to spread the work done in the Sixth Form to the Lower School, with a view to establishing an approach to students' mental health which is both preventative and reactive. In addition, their work will involve creating a Student Support Group in which younger pupils can seek advice from Sixth Formers where it is appropriate. We will continue to share good practice with other schools and work closely with Boys in Mind as a flagship school.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

We hope that sharing our mental health journey contributes in a positive way to the government's call for evidence on the impact of Covid-19 on children's services. At Beechen Cliff, these have been demanding times for pupils, parents and staff, but in a solution focused way, we want to share the **positive impact of Covid-19**; the school has used lockdown as an opportunity to take the next steps in its mental health and well-being strategy to ensure that good comes out of this challenging situation. We remain ever-excited about what the future holds for our young people.

Our recommendations for schools would be:

Recommendation 1

Take a whole-school approach to mental health and well-being, involving all stakeholders;

Recommendation 2

Place student leadership and evaluation at the heart of any strategies;

Recommendation 3

Dovetail mental health and well-being strategies with work on equalities; and

Recommendation 4

Use solution focused approaches to promote hope, possibility and taking opportunities, even under different circumstances, to notice and bring about change for the better

6. References

https://www.stonewall.org.uk/system/files/lgbt_in_britain_health.pdf