

STORT VALLEY SCHOOLS TRUST

SUMMER 2024

MENTORING



"I deal mostly with anxiety and depression but I also find things like school and friends more difficult due to my ADHD and my struggle with disordered eating and body image. I want to say that the support I've been given has been amazing, even when I haven't been able to be in school and have my sessions in person, I've been able to do them online instead and still access the safe space I need. Even if I just want to talk about my week or when I have more serious things to discuss, I'm always heard and I always leave a session feeling better than before, having talked about what I wanted in a safe space" 😊 – **Mentee**



"I felt proud to lead the soul spaces this Easter and tell the children how much God loves them. It was really spiritual and I thought we really helped the children to connect to God. It made me feel brilliant helping others feel special and loved."

– **Student Chaplaincy Team**

CHAPLAINCY DROP IN

 at lunchtime is just one of

the support services we provide. Drop in blends Soul Spaces with chaplaincy care and community. *"I like coming because it gives us the chance to talk about Jesus and God and talk to our friends about our different opinions,"*

"I come because I can relax and get away from any drama and the space is relaxing and calmed you down"

The beauty of this kind of group is that it can evolve in a truly authentic way, meeting the needs of the students within a specific school setting. Drop in gives all students, who choose, the opportunity to learn more about faith and talk openly about how they feel. - **Kt Haynes** kt.stortvalley@gmail.com



We are incredibly fortunate to have a schoolworker from SVST with us once a week. The children benefit massively from their 1:1 mentoring work. It is also wonderful that they are able to run soul spaces several times a year. The children who help lead these with them love doing so and the children who participate are always fully engaged and full of questions about faith. In addition, when asked, the schoolworker is always willing to talk about aspects of the Christian faith with individual classes. Last term she visited Y5 on more than one occasion and the children loved being able to ask her endless questions about Heaven and the second coming. She gave some really helpful and thoughtful responses which enabled the children to explore Christianity more deeply." – **Staff Member**

EASTER SOUL SPACES

Soul Spaces are so special. They offer a unique space within school life for students and staff to reflect, pause and be still. Due to the creative heart and care of the student chaplaincy team, each space is designed so that all students can gain access. It was an honour to watch and support them as they led the whole school through. A few spaces particularly stick firm in my mind, Sorry Sand and You Matter! Watching the children, write into the sand the things they wanted to say sorry for and then be led to wipe them away and be assured of God's forgiveness. Then watching the student chaplaincy team washing the hands of their fellow students in a Christlike act of service and love was beautiful.



The 'You Matter' space was sensitively constructed, a backdrop of positive statements, a mirror with edifying comments and a wonderful group who spent all day speaking biblical truths and affirmations over every member of the school community, it was truly moving. Soul Spaces are so special. They offer a unique space within school life for students and staff to reflect, pause and be still. Due to the creative heart and care of the student chaplaincy team, each space is designed so that all students can gain access. It was an honour to watch and support them as they led the whole school through. – *Kt Haynes*

PENTECOST PRAYER BREAKFAST

Come and see us at the Bishop's Stortford Churches Together Prayer Breakfast on Saturday 18th May at 10am. We would love to meet you and tell you more about what's happening in schools at the moment.

SPONSORED WALK

For as long as I can remember I've had an ambition to complete a long-distance walk over several days with my Dad. Originally, we'd discussed completing the Coast-to-Coast path that stretches across the northern counties of England and takes two weeks to complete. However, the opportunity arose this year to do the South Downs Way instead over a slightly shorter 8-day period.

My Dad is 77 and, while he's been a dogwalker and sportsman most of his life, this still presented a physical challenge for us both. We trained by doing a couple of 10 mile walks a week since January, which, on reflection, got us fit enough to believe we could complete the trail. The South Downs Way is an ancient trail across farmer's fields, woodlands, rivers, valleys, ridges and cliffs. Officially it's 100 miles, although our tracker plotted a few more miles than this! Starting in Winchester we walked eastwards between 12 and 18 miles a day for 8 days and made our final descent into Eastbourne after the hardest part of the trail over the Seven Sisters.

My favourite aspect of the whole experience, aside from the stunning landscape views and the wildlife, was having a goal to aim for over the past few months. Getting a bit fitter and being immersed in an outdoor activity has been truly uplifting. Walking in nature has a way of allowing time to think and talk, but also time to stop thinking and talking and just enjoy being in the moment. The challenge enabled me to raise money for SVST who provide an invaluable service to students in local schools who face some very challenging life circumstances. My Dad raised funds to support a WW2 Charity which preserves the site of a memorial in Normandy. This was a huge motivator along the way, however, I always believed we'd complete the walk. It just took remembering to put one foot in front of the other and follow the arrows. Thank you to everyone that supported us. – *Alison Franklin, Birchwood High School*



MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Last month I was given the opportunity to refresh my Mental Health First Aid training with some of the pastoral team at Radwinter School. We attended a two day course run by Mental Health First Aid England at their office in Saffron Walden. NHS studies show that 1 in 6 young people in England (aged 5 to 16) experienced a mental health problem in 2020, up from 1 in 9 in 2017 and there are many factors which contribute to poor mental health in our young people. The course taught us how to approach, assess and assist a young person who may be in crisis, how



to listen and communicate, give support and information and encourage further support. As with physical health, symptoms and flare ups can fluctuate so it was helpful to be reminded of what to look out for. It was an extremely worthwhile couple of days and the skills learnt are invaluable for the context in which we work. – *Nicola Williamson* nicola@svst.org.uk