



September 2025


Dear Hollyfield Community,

Welcome to the very first edition of our new Personal Development Newsletter! We are so excited to bring you this new resource, created to support and inspire students and to keep parents and carers informed about their children's journey through secondary school and beyond.


At Hollyfield we believe that education is about more than just academic grades. It's about helping you grow into confident, resilient, and well-rounded individuals who are ready for the challenges and opportunities of the future. Our Personal Development programme is a huge part of this, and was recognised by Ofsted as an area of real strength in the recent inspection. This newsletter is designed to be a companion to it.

Extra! Extra! Read all about it...

Our **extracurricular timetables** for the Autumn term have been shared with students on their Year Group Noticeboards, on the website and on posters around the school. You can also find them here:

 [Extracurricular Music 2025-26.pdf](#)

 [Extracurricular PE Autumn 1](#)

 [Extracurricular Clubs 2025-6.pdf](#)

Our fabulous, committed and enthusiastic team of teachers and TAs provide all these opportunities free of charge - and many as a direct result of student requests. Every club attended earns achievement points for the students, and it is our collective aim to ensure that every student attends at least one club or activity each week.

We offer a range of **student leadership opportunities** at Hollyfield. Last year, our student working party planned Hollyfield's first ever Culture Day; our sixth form Head Students led the Student Council; student ambassadors supported guest students from Taiwan; Vibusha (then in Year 12) led a wonderful fundraiser for Cancer Research and Flynn (now in Year 13) ran the London Marathon, raising over £3600 for the school. This term, we will be electing new Head Students, appointing a new Student Council and training a team of ambassadors to guide prospective Hollyfield Students and their families around the school site in our Open Events.

Mr Poole, our Careers lead, is busily planning the **Key Stage 4 and 5 Futures Careers Fair**, to take place on 8 October from 6.30-8.30pm. It is always such a fabulous event, where students can find out more about a wide range of careers and next steps. The event also gives students a chance to practise their networking skills in talking to a wide variety of guests, from a wealth of organisations, including the armed forces, universities, business and the creative arts. We are very happy to include volunteers from our community of parents/carers, so if you would be happy to come along and represent your field, please email Mr Poole:

ipoole@hollyfield.kingston.sch.uk

We heard, over the summer holidays, that Hollyfield's theatre company, **Ilex Theatre** will be taking part in The National Theatre's Connections festival. This is a really exciting opportunity! Our students will rehearse and perform a play, written specifically for young actors, here at Hollyfield. Family and friends will be invited to watch - and they will be joined by a director from The National Theatre, who will give us notes and ideas. A few weeks later, our students will perform again at The Lyric, Hammersmith (which is a wonderful professional theatre). We can't wait to get started and to bring you more news about the project.

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Our incredible **Music** department is also busy preparing for their next public performance, after the amazing (and record-breaking) Hollyfest. Given that our Christmas Concert has grown so much over the years, with over 150 performers taking the stage (including rock bands, swing band, orchestra, the ukulele ensemble and numerous soloists), we have decided to spread the musical magic over two evenings. On December 17, our choirs and instrumentalists will share a traditional carol service at St Mark's church and on December 18, the Christmas Concert will take place in the school hall - and it will be a night to remember! To catch up on all things Performing Arts, please head to the website or follow this link: [Performing Arts at Hollyfield](#).

Our programme of **trips, visits and residential**s for 2025-6 has begun already. On the weekend of 6 and 7 September, our fabulous staff teams took students to the rugby world cup in Brighton and also on a DofE expedition. We have Geography field trips, a photography workshop in Kew Gardens, a Media Studies visit to Sky Studios and an overseas trip to New York and Washington coming up this half term, as well as an Activities Day for students in all year groups in December. You can catch up on all of these adventures (and so much more) by following us on Instagram: hollyfield_school.

Each half term in the newsletter, we'll be focusing on a key theme related to your personal growth, from managing stress and boosting your/your child's mental wellbeing to exploring future careers and building great relationships. This month, as we start the academic year, we will be looking at our character curriculum values of Organisation and Communication. In PSHE we will be looking at the theme of Living in the Wider World.

What is our Character Curriculum?

Within one of their form tutor periods a week, your child will study **Hollyfield's Character Education Curriculum**.

These sessions will be used to develop aspects of character such as:

Good communication
Organisation
Bouncebackability
Initiative
Gratitude

Over the next couple of weeks we will be focusing on:

Good Communication



Communication (noun)

- > The imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium
- > Means of sending or receiving information

Staff will be looking out for and rewarding great examples around the school.



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Recognising & Managing Stress

This resource is designed to help you understand and cope with stress. We all experience stress at different times, whether it's because of exams, social situations, or just the pressures of daily life. For many, the transition to secondary school or returning after a long break can be particularly difficult, so recognizing and managing stress in children is a helpful way of supporting them.

This guide will give you practical tips and strategies for spotting the signs of stress, managing your feelings, and building resilience. We'll cover everything from simple mindfulness exercises to advice on seeking support when you need it. By learning to recognize and manage stress, you can improve your mental wellbeing and feel more in control.

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

RECOGNISING & MANAGING STRESS

According to recent studies, over 60% of young people report feeling regularly overwhelmed – with stress impacting their learning, emotional wellbeing and social connections. If left unaddressed, stress can lead to more serious concerns such as anxiety, depression or disengagement. This guide offers ten practical, evidence-based strategies to help children and young people recognise, manage and recover from stress in healthy ways.

- 1 SPOT THE SUBTLE SIGNS**
Look out for changes in mood, behaviour, or energy levels, such as irritability, withdrawal, clinginess, or frequent headaches. These may indicate that a child is feeling overwhelmed. By tuning into these cues early and offering a calm, non-judgemental space to talk, adults can help children feel heard and supported before issues escalate.
- 2 KEEP CONVERSATIONS FLOWING**
Make time for open, informal check-ins – whether it's during car journeys, over dinner, or in quiet classroom moments. Let children know it's okay to talk about what's bothering them. Regular, low-pressure conversations create a safe space where emotions are validated, not dismissed.
- 3 MAKE MOVEMENT PART OF THE DAY**
Physical activity can dramatically reduce stress hormones while improving mood and focus. Encourage movement through activities children genuinely enjoy – from team sports to dancing around the kitchen. Even light activity like stretching or walking the dog can help us all unwind.
- 4 SUPPORT HEALTHY SLEEP PATTERNS**
Poor sleep makes stress harder to manage. Establish a calming evening routine that avoids screens before bedtime and promotes winding down, such as reading, listening to music, or chatting quietly. Good sleep hygiene helps reset mood, enhances concentration, and boosts emotional resilience.
- 5 PRACTISE MINDFULNESS**
Mindfulness doesn't have to mean long periods of meditation. A few slow breaths before lessons or short family meditation sessions before bed can make a real difference. These simple habits help children ground themselves, reduce emotional reactivity, and build inner calm over time.
- 6 SET DIGITAL BOUNDARIES**
Excessive screen time, especially before bed or on social media, is linked with higher stress levels. Set clear expectations for when and where devices can be used and suggest screen-free alternatives like crafts, nature walks, or board games to promote digital balance and reduce overstimulation.
- 7 NURTURE SOCIAL CONNECTIONS**
Strong relationships act as a buffer against stress. Whether it's a trusted adult, a sibling, or a good friend, ensure children have people around them they can talk to and spend quality time with. Help them build those bonds through shared activities and meaningful interaction.
- 8 PROGRESS OVER PERFECTION**
Set realistic goals and praise effort, not just outcomes. When children feel pressured to be perfect, stress naturally follows. Celebrate small wins and help them reframe setbacks as learning opportunities. This helps build confidence and reduces the fear of failure.
- 9 TEACH EVERYDAY PROBLEM-SOLVING**
Use real-life scenarios to build resilience. Encourage children to identify problems, consider possible solutions, and choose a plan of action. Practising these steps builds a sense of control and reduces the helplessness that often accompanies stress.
- 10 BE THE MODEL THEY NEED**
Children notice how adults respond to challenges. Model healthy coping strategies such as taking breaks, asking for help, or calmly expressing frustration. By showing how you manage stress constructively, you help normalise these behaviours and encourage children to do the same.

Meet Our Expert
Anna Bateman is Director of Halcyon Education Ltd, Director for Wellbeing and Family Services at Leigh Trust, and lead expert for mental health at The National College. Anna specialises in strategic mental health solutions for schools, supporting educators and families to improve resilience, emotional literacy, and overall wellbeing for children across the UK.

#WakeUpWednesday
The National College

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We hope you have enjoyed this first edition of our PD Newsletter and we look forward to sharing news with you throughout the year.

The Personal Development Team

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