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## WELL-BEING PART 2: How often do you get a healthy night's sleep?

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### Mrs Booth, Well-being & Engagement Officer



If you don't feel like you get enough sleep on a regular basis, you're not alone. According to the World Health Organisation, two-thirds of adults don't get the recommended eight hours. And regularly getting less than six has a significant detrimental impact on our health: it doubles our cancer

risk; it's a determining factor for Alzheimer's; it raises our blood sugar and blood pressure, hardening our arteries and making us feel hungrier; and increases our chance of developing depression. That's a depressing thought in itself! So, why are we the only species on the planet deliberately depriving ourselves of sleep? Could GP practices prescribe sleep to all of us as a preventative treatment?

Matthew Walker, Professor of Neuroscience and Psychology and Director of the Sleep and Neuro-imaging Laboratory, has researched this for twenty years and published the brilliant 'Why We Sleep' to get us to think again. He makes an impressive case for the power of sleep which, he says, enhances all our major organs and particularly the processes of the brain. It enhances our capacity to learn and to transfer that learning to our longer-term memory. So, eight hours' sleep is also crucial for our students in this relatively new educational climate of end-of-course external

assessment. Gone is the modular approach of learning, assessing and banking the coursework grades; most of our students will sit about twenty-five exam papers in May/June of year 11 where the learning from years 7 to 11 will all be tested. Moreover, at A-level the majority of marks will be awarded for end-of-course exams following two years of study. Excellent memory function will play a vital part.

Each year we measure year 7 and 10 students' opinions about their well-being through Public Health England's Emotional Health Needs Assessment, which this year tells us that 69% of students report 'I sleep okay'. This is

slightly better than the Calderdale average of 65%, but slightly worse than our students the previous year when 76% reported this. I regularly work with our students on their sleep routines, either one-to-one or through poster campaigns around school.

Perhaps it can be a Christmas present for the whole family that we make a promise to ourselves to establish a healthier sleep routine, not only to help the students embed learning from lessons into their memory, but also for its long-term physical health benefits for us all. Merry Christmas!

69% OF NHGS STUDENTS SAID "I SLEEP OKAY" - down from 76% on last year

### NHGS recommends the following from the latest scientific research on sleep:

- Go out in daylight to enhance the circadian rhythm.
- Have a regular bedtime to help the body clock, and aim for eight hours.
- Get regular physical exercise so the body and mind are both tired.
- Avoid napping, caffeine and blue light on screens after school.
- Ensure the blue light filter is activated in the evening on phones and tablets.
- Set aside thinking time after school so that anxieties can be dealt with.
- Have a relaxing hour-long wind down before bed with nothing stimulating, eg homework, phones or gaming. Reading, family TV, chill-out music or a warm shower are preferable.

## LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT - MRS QUIGLEY

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For each newsletter, we are going to shine a spotlight on a member of the NHGS Leadership Group. For this issue, we will feature Mrs Quigley. Mrs Quigley graduated from Liverpool University with a BSc (Hons) degree in Zoology. She moved to NHGS as Head of Biology in 1998 and also took up a pastoral role within the sixth form team in 2007. She was appointed as Director of Sixth Form in 2010 and a member of Leadership in 2018. She enjoys walking her two dogs, watching rugby league and attempts to read a chapter of a book each night!

**Q. Part of the NHGS Vision is to be a school where the students develop skills, knowledge and attributes to navigate life with confidence. Do you think we are achieving this?**

*As Head of Sixth Form I feel that I really do see the fruits of the labour that has gone on throughout the school. We are sending our students out to a rich variety of courses, apprenticeships and employment. It is not just the academic achievements that make our students stand out, but what else they bring. I truly believe that as a school we embrace our motto Living to Learn, Learning to Live.*

*Last week Mrs Manley published the extra-curricular booklet that went on for 14 pages! Our commitment to "developing the whole person" continues into the Sixth Form with both our core enrichment programme and optional courses.*

**Q. The Vision also talks about students setting courses of their own choosing. Do you think this is happening?**

*Last year we sent 100 students to over 35 different universities and saw an increase in the uptake of higher level apprenticeships. Students are making informed choices and decisions for themselves.*

*Sometimes students need some time to review their options, and it's important to understand that this not a bad thing. This year, I have written over 20 further applications for last year's students – we see this as a strength that they have the confidence to take a year to make the correct decision for them.*

*It's our role to support our students to make these informed and independent decisions.*

*I've recently received a letter from a former student who took the decision to change her A-level options at the end of Y12, effectively restarting her study. In the letter she thanked us for our support following her decision.*

**Q. You mentioned an increase in the uptake of higher level apprenticeships. Can you tell us more?**

*We've definitely seen a shift in the destination landscape, with these higher-level apprenticeships establishing themselves as a credible alternative to university degrees, and for some students it's the right path.*

*Only last week I had a student literally bounce into the office to tell me he had got his placement at KPMG after a very thorough interview process. Expectations are high for these places, and competition is very steep. As I mentioned, it's not just about academic success, it's about the other skills and experiences these students can talk about in their applications and interviews.*

**Q. How do you see the future of the Sixth Form?**

*Local post-16 education is changing with a number of schools being forced to close their Sixth Forms or work in collaboration to maintain the breadth of courses on offer. We are fortunate that we are still able to offer the full range of courses with all but one subject being taught in house.*

*We know that students have a choice of where to go after their GCSEs, but we are passionate that our Sixth Form offers something special - from the choice of 25 courses, teaching excellence, well-being and student support plus the enrichment opportunities developing those all important leadership skills working with our younger students.*

*We have recently interviewed all Year 11 students and we are really pleased such a high percentage are indicating that they are likely to stay with us for their A levels.. We have also received over 200 external applications already. We are bucking both local and national trends in that our sixth form is absolutely thriving!*