United Against Bullying School Case Study: 'Speak Up' initiative

How St Peter's School developed the 'Speak Up' initiative

Context of our anti-bullying work

Using the results of student wellbeing surveys during the pandemic, as well as this academic year's baseline audit, we noticed a disparity in the way we are asking the students to communicate with us and the methods with which they are most comfortable. While proud of what we have achieved thus far with safeguarding and anti-bullying, there was more to be done.

What we hoped to achieve

- To move with the times and remove additional barriers for students wishing to disclose by incorporating the utilisation of popular technology through the means of QR codes and the wider use of social media.
- To evolve with trends in social media platforms by broadening our online presence to Instagram in addition to our Facebook Page.
- To educate and celebrate our diversity amongst the student body – Knowledge is power and when students understand and empathise with those around them, bullying is less likely.
- To devote more time and resources to early interventions of bullying, minimising the negative impact of bullying and mental health issues.

The action we took

- Whole School Wellbeing survey with open ended questions to allow students to give their views and air any concerns anonymously, while also giving them the option to provide a name to engage in dialogue.
- Speak Up Student Focus Group, meeting 6 times over the academic year to feed into the design of the provision, using student voice to cater to the needs of the students rather that imposing our own ideas upon them.
- Creation of the #SpeakUp and posters/stickers to be used in a similar way to the "Ask for Angela" initiative in pubs and clubs. Toilet cubicles/corridors/tutor rooms/communal spaces will be decorated, so students are never far from a reminder of what is there to help them.

Impact and outcomes of the work

This is an ongoing project, so wider impact is yet to be measured, but what we have seen so far is:

- Positive feedback from the students. Students spoken to have been happy with the use of QR codes and social media, as this is the way that they are used to communicating with each other. It also means that the first step to getting help doesn't have a 'face' assigned to it, they can just speak up and the help follows. The students have also helped to design the webpage that they link to, so that the language is student friendly.
- Students have valued being part of the process (and teaching their teachers to use Instagram!)
- Positive feedback from the Student Welfare Committee, a subgroup of the school's governing body in charge of safeguarding.

Pen Portrait from a member of the Speak Up Focus Group:

As a student who participated in the project, I feel like this project could help me and so many other students who are struggling with anything in their lives. Sometimes, it's really hard to speak up but the entire point of the project is to make it easier, to make it more accessible for us students to open up and relieve the amount of stress that some things can cause. It is nice to know that now we'll have this support at school, other than always going to First Aid to take a time out, which is still so stressful since afterwards, you still won't know what to do about whatever you're dealing with.
Some things can't be fixed and it's better to just get it out of your system other than keep thinking about it. I like how the thinking process of the project was always focused on making it easier and more helpful for us and it's nice how this was thought through so that there is no shame for the person.

With regards to further impact:

- We expect a surge in initial usage, which will be monitored by five members of staff, who will triage messages via the QR code and via social media.
- Our hope it that students will speak up sooner, so many incidents can be dealt with using early intervention, reducing the number of students whose needs require escalating.
- Speak Up will be embedded into the tutor programme twofold – Using half-termly activities to educate and celebrate our diversity in school and to bring the Speak Up initiative into the forefront for discussion, and as another reminder to students of its existence.
- Parents have engaged well with the School Facebook Page and so we hope Instagram to be a welcomed addition, particularly for students.

What we have learned

- Staff and student absence due to the Covid outbreak has delayed the launch of the SpeakUp initiative.
- We started with one Student Focus Group. It rapidly became apparent that the Sixth Form had different needs and would value their own space to discuss matters. This has led to the creation of an Equality and Diversity Prefect for Academic Year 22/23 and creating a new focus group of Sixth Form Only students.