

# **United Against Bullying School Case Study: Developing pupils positive mental health and wellbeing**

## **How Lincoln Minster Prep School Reception developed pupils mental health and emotional wellbeing**

### **Context of our anti-bullying work**

As a school, we have always been proactive in preventing bullying and working collaboratively with parents, staff and pupils to create a kind, nurturing and supportive environment. Any suspected or reported incidents of bullying have always been dealt with promptly and efficiently. However, we identified a trend in the nature of reported incidents (quite often quickly resolved and not found to be bullying) that we wanted to address. Through undertaking activities with different age groups of children (including the anti-bullying alliance questionnaire) and involving staff in the process, we decided we wanted to focus more heavily on pupil relationships and well-being. Particularly for our younger pupils but not exclusively, the impact of Covid and not being able to have interactions with their peers presented some challenge in terms of fostering and maintaining positive relationships. For all pupils, mental health and well-being needed to be focused on – the impact of developing the emotional well-being we felt would link directly with improving positive people relationships.

### **What we hoped to achieve**

This project aimed at developing the pupils mental health and emotional well-being. We wanted to give the children strategies that would assist them in managing their emotions, giving them the confidence and capabilities to forge positive relationships with their peers even when things didn't always go as they planned. We believe, as a school, that if the pupils feel safe, calm, included and listened to, their interactions will also be calmer and they will be more inclusive themselves. The questionnaire highlighted that there was still some work to be done on the pupils feeling calm and happy in school. We felt that this would link directly with prevention of behaviours that could eventually lead to a reportable bullying incident.

### **The action we took**

The photo included here gives an insight into the kinds of things we have been doing in school. Some of the projects, like mindful monsters for our youngest pupils, have been running for a longer period of time and we have always been keen to consider mindful activities. However, following our work stemming from being part of this project, we decided

to include mental health champions and integrate more of a mindful approach across the curriculum.

**MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPIONS**

Years 1-6 are empowered to become mental health champions through engaging teaching methods, activities and videos. Our pupils are taught to understand what mental health is and why it's important to us. They learn the benefits of physical exercise, getting a good night's sleep, speaking to a trusted adult or friend when we have troubles that are worrying us, taking time to undertake hobbies and having fun.

Years 5&6 take part in live zoom sessions with other schools where they can share ideas about what good mental health is and how we can help our friends at school look after their mental health. Pupils also explored the signs that someone was struggling with something and what they could do to help.



**ONE GOAL**

The school works closely with One Goal, an organisation aimed at improving children's mental health and wellbeing, to deliver workshops within the classroom. These workshops teach pupils the skills and qualities needed to become an effective mental health champion. The school is now working towards becoming a certified Mental Health Champion School.



**MINDFUL ACTIVITIES**

All pupils explore a range of mindful activities during their time with the school. These include:

- Lighting candles for reading time
- Using Sensory Stones to express feelings
- Sensory walks
- Memory games
- Guided meditation
- Relaxing breaks with music playing and lights turned off
- Outdoor woodlands setting and reading tips
- Mud kitchen
- Team work activities

**ENVIRONMENT**

We provide our pupils with a peaceful and stress-free environment in which to practice mindful activities such as outdoor meditation, reading/relaxing in low-light rooms and exercising their bodies and brains on our brand new outdoor learning and play. Meditation, and a mindful approach as a whole, has been recognised as important life skills, encouraging the development of emotional intelligence. Research shows that meditation increases children's resilience to stress, boosts self-confidence, enhances performance and focus and reduces anxiety.



**MINDFUL MONSTERS**

'Mindful Monsters' is a children's rhyming book by Sylvia Fae, aimed to support children in understanding mindfulness. There are seven monsters, one for each colour of the rainbow and all have qualities that when brought together make a happy, healthy, respectful and kind individual. The school uses this book throughout the year to help pupils regulate their emotions more effectively and to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of being mindful and how it can help ensure we are part of a happy school. Pupils displaying a mindful approach are rewarded with coloured stickers relating to the monster/emotion.

**Impact and outcomes of the work**

The impact of this project has exceeded expectation. All of the staff have been proactive in considering the mental health and well-being of our pupils and taking time to integrate a mindful approach. Access to the outdoor area on a consistent basis has also contributed to a much calmer environment where the children feel more able to manage difficult emotions and work with their peers in a much more inclusive way. The anti-bullying alliance questionnaire that was completed recently statistically proved that the pupils, overall, felt happier, calmer, safer and more liked within school. Parents have been made aware of the approach we are taking in school so that they can continue this good practise within the home environment too.

Over the next year, with increased use of all of these approaches, and used alongside our current assembly, PSHE programmes of study, we expect to an increased number of pupils who are able to manage their emotions in a calm way- even with our youngest pupils. We also feel that the pupils will continue to interact positively with their peers and be more able to compromise and be mindful of how others are feeling during certain situations. All of these factors combined will help to continue to foster a calm, safe, nurturing and happy environment whereby pupils are listened to and negative behaviours that could escalate resulting in a bullying incident being logged reduced greatly.

## What we have learned

As a staff team, we always knew that if a child was happy, safe and secure- naturally their behaviours would be more positive and attitudes to learning improved. We feel that this project has emphasised all the more the importance of focusing on the whole child, educating them on feelings, emotions, relationships to maximise positive behaviours and feed into our anti bullying process and procedures.