

United Against Bullying School Case Study: Staff training to support pupil wellbeing

How Middlestown Primary Academy provided staff training to support pupil wellbeing

Context of our anti-bullying work

The focus of this work was to improve the wellbeing of all children at Middlestown Primary Academy (MPA). Children's wellbeing has been a huge focus since returning from lockdowns/home learning due to the high levels of anxiety that many children were facing in the Autumn term.

What we hoped to achieve

The aim was to increase the children's wellbeing and offer support to those children that needed it. This included children who were struggling both in school and out of school.

The action we took

Staff training was a huge part of this case study. At the beginning of this academic year, there were only 2 mental health first aiders in school. Now, in the summer term, there are 4 mental health first aiders and 1 senior mental health first aider. The staff that are trained work across different areas of school (e.g. breakfast club, KS1 staff, KS2 staff, afterschool club, SLT) as we were keen for staff to be available to children in all year groups so children felt comfortable to approach at least one adult that was trained. Additional staff have also come forwards to express an interest in the MHFA training for the future.

The MHFA in school meet on a regular basis to discuss specific children and to share good practise, as well as offer advice and support on specific children and on the mental-load each MHFA is taking on when speaking to a number of children on a weekly basis.

Training has been delivered to both teachers and support staff in school. This includes anxiety, self-harm, behavioural needs, SEND, trauma and OCD. Staff are now more confident in speaking to children regarding their mental health and can then determine if the child needs further support from a trained member of staff, or if their class teacher is a strong enough support for them.

The new PSHE curriculum was developed and rolled out at the beginning of the academic year. Within this curriculum, there is a large focus on physical health and mental wellbeing. All staff ensure that mental wellbeing is openly discussed in the classroom at all times, but in particular during the period of time in which this topic is taught. The whole school follows a yearly overview in which topics are taught at the same time and there is clear progression from one year group to the next when learning about mental wellbeing, e.g. starting with keeping healthy in Year 1, moving onto what affects our feelings in Year 3 and then ways to take care of our mental health in Year 6. There are display boards in communal areas of school as well as posters dotted around school with key names and faces on so the children are aware of who they can speak to if they need to.

The decision to train a member of staff as a Senior Mental Health First Aider was taken on board to ensure there was support for the trained MHFA in school as well as support for any other members of staff who may be struggling with their own mental health and need support in school. The SMHFA is a member of the SLT so staff would feel more comfortable in approaching them as opposed to another MHFA in school.

Impact and outcomes of the work

It is clear that the children are well supported in school, from their class teachers, the learning mentor in school and the 5 MHFA in school. In the autumn term when the children completed the questionnaire, the question "I worry a lot" showed these results:

	Total	SEN/D	Non SEN/D	Free school meal	Non free school meal	Total male	Total female	Total other
Never	27	5	22	1	26	16	11	0
A Little	53	10	43	9	44	27	26	0
A Lot	5	2	3	0	5	2	3	0
Always	7	2	5	2	5	4	3	0
Total	92	19	73	12	80	49	43	0

In the summer term, the results were:

	Total	SEN/D	Non SEN/D	Free school meal	Non free school meal	Total male	Total female	Total other
Never	25	3	22	2	23	13	12	0
A Little	48	11	37	7	41	30	18	0
A Lot	8	1	7	0	8	3	5	0
Always	5	2	3	1	4	2	3	0
Total	86	17	69	10	76	48	38	0

As you can see, there was a slight decrease in the number of children 'always' feeling worried and feeling worried a lot or a little. Although these are small differences, it still shows that the support we have in school has helped children in some way to reduce their worries and anxieties. There were 6 less children taking part in this questionnaire than in the autumn term.

Other questions that are relevant to this case study are those relating to the sleep habits of children. It is well-known that children that have many worries and anxieties often struggle to sleep and will wake up throughout the night. In the autumn term, the results relating to 'I sleep well' were:

	Total	SEN/D	Non SEN/D	Free school meal	Non free school meal	Total male	Total female	Total other
Never	16	4	12	4	12	11	5	0
A Little	20	3	17	1	19	11	9	0
A Lot	30	6	24	3	27	10	20	0
Always	26	6	20	4	22	17	9	0
Total	92	19	73	12	80	49	43	0

In the summer term, the results were:

	Total	SEN/D	Non SEN/D	Free school meal	Non free school meal	Total male	Total female	Total other
Never	6	0	6	3	3	3	3	0
A Little	16	4	12	1	15	7	9	0
A Lot	41	9	32	2	39	22	19	0
Always	23	4	19	4	19	16	7	0
Total	86	17	69	10	76	48	38	0

These results show that there has been a huge increase in the number of children responding to 'a lot' of the time and a large decrease in the number of children responding 'never'. Although we cannot directly link the work in school to the sleep habits of children, it is clear that children feel more settled on an evening and are generally sleeping better.

What we have learned

The training all staff received for their MHFA award was of extremely high quality and prepared staff for questions and situations that arise in school relating to the mental health and wellbeing of all children. Staff feel more confident to discuss specific areas of concern with the children without feeling they will make situations worse or not support the children in a way they feel offers 'enough' support. The quality of training you receive relating to the wellbeing of children is incredibly important and influential to how much support the children then receive from you and how much it affects them.