

## United Against Bullying Plus School Case Study:

### How [School] reviewed their practices to ensure that pupils' mental health is supported

#### Context of our anti-bullying work

As a school, post pandemic, we have noticed an increase in levels of poor mental and emotional health in our students. An increasing number of students are reporting anxiety as a barrier to school. We felt that while our current processes in school worked well, we wanted to review how we support students to stay mentally well through every experience they have in school to drive our strategy forward.

#### What we hoped to achieve

As a school, we wanted to identify any further opportunities and areas for development in our whole school strategy to support students mental and physical health. We hoped this would help to develop our student's understanding of how to stay mentally and physically well and to support our open culture where it is okay to let others know if you are struggling.

#### The action we took

- We designated a member of SLT as Senior Mental Health Lead, who undertook training.
- We funded staff to complete Mental Health First Aider training to spot the signs and respond to mental & physical needs of someone experiencing a mental health issue.
- The Senior Mental Health Lead completed a whole school audit on mental, emotional and physical wellbeing to identify good practice across the school and areas for development. For example, it was noted that while we are confident our PSHE curriculum explores mental and emotional health and wellbeing and strategies to support our students to stay mentally well, we did not have regular systems in place to evaluate the impact of this. A curriculum meeting was held with the SMHL and the PSHE department to discuss how we can monitor this and they have implemented student voice feedback jars in all classes to capture their views after these lessons.
- We reviewed our Peer Mentoring access across the school to ensure students are able to access this support.
- We were also aware that across the curriculum there are more implicit ways that we support students with their mental and emotional health. Each department met to discuss the soft skills that their subject teaches that can help to support good mental health. These conversations were then fed back to Senior Leadership and good practice shared across the school.

- The audit also identified that a way to support good mental health is to acknowledge a range of achievements in school, not just academic, which can also support a sense of belonging. The Pastoral Team reviewed our whole school rewards to include a range of achievements. This was shared with the wider school community to support celebrating all achievements.
- We also considered how eating healthily can support overall student wellbeing. We created a student 'foodie group' to work with our catering company to provide feedback on the current food offering in our restaurant. We have also signed up to Bite Back 2030, to create a student group who will be reviewing ways that we can improve the experience in our school restaurant.
- Our SENCo secured a place on the SEMH in Secondary Schools project. This is where educational psychologists provide advice on a range of whole school and individual difficulties regarding SEMH and provide the school with bespoke and individualised support according to our school's needs. We also attend Solutions Focused Consultations, with the educational psychology service, to work collaboratively across the locality to support our students.

### Impact and outcomes of the work

We have received positive feedback from staff regarding the change to our rewards – a focus on all achievements – and the impact this has had on students engagement with lessons. Parents have particularly enjoyed the school's focus on rewarding students who demonstrate our school values of kindness, empathy and respect. This has included reward postcards home, phone calls and celebration in year group assemblies.

The impact of completing the whole school audit has really helped the SMHL to capture a picture of ways that we support emotional, mental and physical wellbeing across the school and next steps to drive forward. For example, now that we have considered ways to capture student voice in response to our lessons on mental and emotional wellbeing, we will monitor how effective this is and review next academic year in light of this.

We expect there to be further impact as we move through the next academic year, including wider training for staff as Mental Health First Aiders.

We are also looking forward to our student group creating their campaigns to champion healthy food choices and a better experience for all as part of Bite Back 2030.

The impact of taking part in the SEMH in Secondary Schools project has enabled us to gain an insight into how other school's support similar issues and has offered us an opportunity to reflect and review our current practices to move forward.

## What we have learned

We are a large school and it has been helpful to take a step back from the day-to-day running of the school to consider how we support our students to be mentally, emotionally and physical well, to review current processes and practices, and to drive our support forward through careful planning.