EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING CPD PROGRAMME
2017-2018

A survey in 2016 by the National Children’s Bureau showed many school leaders reported a dramatic increase in the number of students suffering from mental health and wellbeing issues over the past five years. 55% had seen a large increase in anxiety or stress and 40% reported a big increase in the problem of cyberbullying. 79% reported an increase in self harm or suicidal thoughts amongst students. ‘Children today face new challenges - such as the demands of 24-hour connectivity on social media, cyberbullying and sexting. They’re also under huge pressure to do well in exams, in the face of an increasingly competitive jobs market. Time and again research has shown these pressures are resulting in a rising tide of mental health issues amongst the young. But as well as helping those with problems, we need to create a positive climate where wellbeing and happiness can bloom. For schools, this means ensuring that mental health is everyone’s business’.

A report in TES (June 2017) outlines the frightening gaps in mental health provision for children and the need for school staff to be equipped to skill children in dealing with these issues whilst not becoming counsellors themselves. In December 2017 the government published a green paper on ‘Transforming Children’s and Young People’s Mental Health Provision’ which included the recommendation for schools to designate a mental health lead, yet another reason why giving teachers and leaders the opportunity to address and skill themselves in supporting students with emotional health and wellbeing is vital.

Teaching Talent, the alliance of teaching schools in Buckinghamshire, was commissioned by Buckinghamshire County Council to deliver a CPD programme on supporting student emotional health and wellbeing for schools in Bucks in response to this key priority. The programme was devised and led by Aylesbury Vale Teaching Partnership with the aim of equipping teachers and leaders with the skills and resources to support their students.

By the end of the programme 94% of delegates felt better equipped to support student emotional health and wellbeing in their school, having identified at the start of the programme that a lack of time, resources and knowledge were the biggest barriers in supporting their students. There was an overwhelming response from delegates that there is a clear need for extra provision and support at EYFS and primary level, particularly as there are few external agencies available to support students under 11 years of age.

12 secondary and 28 primary schools from across the county accessed the various twilight sessions on the programme. Facilitators involved in delivery included a range of Specialist Leaders of Education and external agencies as well as case studies of good practice from several schools being presented during the programme. Six twilight training sessions were delivered across the Autumn and Spring Term which covered a range of topics including: mental health literacy, resilience and self-help strategies, using external agencies, the role of PSHE and supporting LGBTQ + students. The programme then culminated in a half-day action planning session at the end of the Spring Term to give delegates an opportunity to plan how they would implement what they had learnt during the programme to take back into their own schools. The implementation and impact of these action plans will then be evaluated during a follow up visit by an SLE during the Summer Term.
Although this programme has successfully provided knowledge and resources to better equip schools to support student emotional health and wellbeing it is crucial that school leaders continue to give this issue the time and focus it deserves as a whole school priority to ensure the effective and sustainable support of all students.

With the prospect of the government’s expectation of a mental health lead in every school to be introduced in the near future, CPD opportunities such as these will become increasingly needed.

‘I’ve worked in the Pastoral Team for two years but have learnt so much listening to all the speakers from different areas of mental health services. It’s also very informative to hear from the young people themselves and the support groups they have set up’.  
*Haydon Abbey School*
‘A fantastic programme that has equipped me with the knowledge and skills to support children in our care and broaden the knowledge of staff’.

Longwick CE Combined School

‘The session on resilience was fantastic and has provided us with a starting point’.

The Cottesloe School
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