

Increasing awareness and knowledge of mental health in year 9 pupils

Background

- - Two suicides of former students of the school 2017 and 2018
- - General realisation that students had received no teaching around mental health in school in up until 2016/17
- - Anger and surprise amongst year 11 students that mental health hadn't previously been covered. Little or no knowledge of where to get help. Mental health issues discussed confidently in class, but less so outside.
- Overall aims; to increase students awareness of mental health symptoms and triggers, an overview of different conditions and signposting them to different agencies who can help and different 'self help' techniques.

Process

- Re-wrote faculty improvement plan to include:
 - Re- wrote scheme of work for year 9:
 - Lesson 1** – Introduction to mental health; symptoms and differences and crossovers between physical health and MH
 - Lesson 2**- An in-depth study into three mental health conditions.
 - Lesson 3** – How different celebrities tackled their own mental health issues
 - Lesson 4** – Different ways to safeguard your own mental wellbeing
- Year 8 scheme of work on mental wellbeing and teen magazine project, not part of this study.
- **Questionnaire** – to one year 9 class before beginning lessons on mental health. The same class was questioned again at the start of year 10 about how much they had learnt.
- **Why start of year 10?** To see whether the knowledge was still here after the six week break, not when they had just studied the topic and it was fresh in their mind.

Baseline survey

A control group of 20 year students. When asked what they already knew about mental health..

- **20%** wrote nothing
- **15%** - 'affects daily life'
- **10%** - 'Lots of people struggle with MH issues'
- One word answers, hard to quantify; e.g. suicide, side-effects, a small different of different side effects e.g. depression, anxiety.
- **10%** said they would be comfortable discussing MH issues
- **60%** said they could get help through school, parents, family, friends.
- **4** different MH conditions listed
- **7** different symptoms correctly identified: Panic attacks, stress, anger, sadness, mood swings, tired, don't eat

Other evidence

- Classwork in students books
- Verbal contributions of students

Research

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/student-mental-health/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/student-life/>

<http://www.innovatingmindscic.com/ofsted-and-mental-health-provisions-in-schools/>

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Results - What did you learn about mental health in year 9?

13 different responses e.g 'Where to get help', listing different potential causes, strategies for living and coping with MH, never to bully anyone with possible MH issues, how to spot MH in friends. Much more qualitative and detailed responses.

- **8 different MH conditions listed**
- **24 different symptoms accurately listed.** Responses that showed evidence of learning in lessons were: Change in behaviour, withdrawal or isolation from friendship groups, compulsion to do irrational acts, self – harm, impaired learning capabilities.
- **73% could explain the difference between physical and mental health.**
 - **80% said they now felt more comfortable talking about mental health**
- **Who can you go to for help? 28.9% parent, 26.3% teacher, 15.7% friend 13.2% family member, 10.5% specialist, 2.6% sibling**

Conclusions

- Some significant improvement
- All students able to articulate what they learnt in their lessons
- 100% increase(4-8) in the number of MH conditions students are able to identify
- Increase from **7 to 24 different symptoms** identified
- **73%** could differentiate between mental and physical health
- **80%** now feel comfortable talking about mental health. A **70%** improvement.
- Students able to identify different family members and the importance of specialists when talking about where they could go to for help

Looking forward

- More accurate signposting to specialists/websites
- Raising awareness of mental health through assemblies/extra curricular – activities, Mental Health Awareness week.
- More emphasis on physical and mental health.