Aileymill Primary School (b)

Engaging the wider school community through a school-based community approach to ending mental health stigma and discrimination.

What is it?

In 2018 Aileymill Primary School's approach to tackle issues of stigma and discrimination surrounding mental health had direct aims for those within the school (see Aileymill Primary School (a)). However, the school found that their approach also engaged the wider school community, e.g. parents and carers.

Who is it for?

Although the project was initially developed to improve the knowledge of the staff and pupils, the buzz seemed to have a much further reach and the school soon found themselves reaching the parents and carers of pupils.

What was done?

A 'Test for Change' pilot was delivered to P6 and P7 pupils and their parents to gauge the response to receiving in-depth and explicit teaching regarding mental health issues and outcomes. Although this was just one element of a wider school assessment, an action plan was developed which fed directly into the school improvement plan – creating a school ethos focused on improving the mental health of its pupils, staff, and wider community. The elements of the action plan that directly impact on the wider community are:

- A 'Meet, Treat & Greet' mental health workshop was delivered to children and parents. For this, five specialists were invited to deliver short presentations on their role and experiences and then welcomed any questions. This included See Me EYP, a community psychiatric nurse, a play therapist, a local minister and the Mental Health Lead(Grant Anderson) who spoke about his experience and journey from thinking mental health was a joke to now empowering a mental health movement within the school.

Why was it done?

Initially, the school-based community approach to the project was devised to address needs identified within the direct school community. However, through the course of the project staff discovered that as pupils became more confident and felt empowered, the knowledge the children were learning and positivity they were spreading, filtered through to parents and carers.

What was the impact?

Parents reported feeling more confident to talk about mental health and recognised the school as a beacon of support for them as well as their children. This was evidenced by the 'Meet, Treat & Greet' workshop. Since running this, parents/carers of pupils within the school have come forward seeking support for themselves – as they are now able to recognise signs of deterioration in their own mental health – and, thanks to Aileymill Primary School, know where to turn and how to seek support.