

PSHE, RSE (Learning to Love) & PFA

As part of our ongoing commitment to maintaining the mental health and well-being of all our pupils we have integrated a program of relaxation into our timetable for those pupils suffering with anxiety and stress. Research into the use of the three core relaxation techniques (controlled breathing, progressive muscle relaxation and guided imagery) has shown that it can have a beneficial effect in reducing the anxiety levels and raising the self-esteem of individuals with learning disabilities, including those with PMLD (Hart and Robbins, 2013; Hwang and Kearney, 2012; Wachelka and Katz, 1999; Hegarty and Last, 1997).

All pupils follow our Learning to Love Curriculum (RSE). Learning to Love helps pupils understand the difference between safe and abusive relationships and equips them with the skills to get help if they need it. Learning to Love is particularly important for our pupils as some pupils with SEND can be more vulnerable to exploitation, sexual violence, bullying etc. Through Learning to Love pupils will improve their ability to maintain appropriate relationships with others and have an increased knowledge of themselves, their bodies and being resilient; reducing their risk of exploitation now and in the future as they progress into adulthood.

Learning to Love helps our pupils love themselves, their bodies and their mind, their friends, families, and people who care for them.

We adopt a tailored, person-centred and dynamic approach to adapting the core techniques so that interventions are individualised and remain relevant throughout the program. This, in conjunction with our commitment to the principles of the Mindmate initiative, allows us to maintain and promote a positive approach to mental health awareness. We believe that by ensuring our pupils are provided with access to interventions such as these we can maximise their ability to engage with school work thus enabling them to achieve progress in all areas more effectively.

In addition to the Mindmate program we give pupils the opportunity to access the DEAL program of study (Developing Emotional Awareness and



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Listening). DEAL was created by the Samaritans. The Scheme has been quality assured by the PSHE Association.

The Impact of Pupil Behaviour and Wellbeing on Educational Outcomes, a report by the Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre (November 2012), showed that children with higher levels of emotional, behavioural and social wellbeing have, on average, higher levels of academic achievement and are more engaged in their education. Children with good emotional wellbeing make good progress in primary school and are engaged in secondary school.

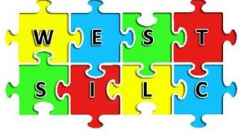
Evidence shows that developing skills using programmes such as DEAL can be very effective to reduce specific mental health problems.

Programs like DEAL can help communication skills, social skills, cooperation, resilience, a sense of optimism, empathy, a positive and realistic self-concept and problem solving skills (Promotion and education 2005 – International Union for Health Promotion and Education vol xii no 3-4).

Research shows that many young people possess negative attitudes towards mental health difficulties among peers and avoid seeking help with their emotional problems (Naylor et al 2009 BJPsych). Young people often deal with personal mental health problems in unsophisticated ways such as bottling them up, sleeping, drinking alcohol or simply hoping they will go away.

Intervention through lessons can increase empathy, develop an understanding as to how emotional difficulties develop and why some people think that life is not worth living. Education helps people become less prejudiced and there is reduced stigma around help-seeking behaviour. As our pupils are often more vulnerable than their contemporaries improving their capacity to identify strategies and seek support if necessary is a core priority.

When appropriate, pupils are supported to complete work experience or supported internships. The move towards employment, independent living, good health, and relationships are embedded in all interactions and



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experiences we offer. There are regular opportunities to develop skills in self-care, cooking etc.