

External Validation Date: May 4th 2023
External Validator: Gill Mullens

Outcome: Based on the findings of the visit, I am pleased to confirm you have achieved externally validated MindMate Friendly status. This demonstrates your commitment to Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) provision in your school.

Information about the assessment process

- The school self-evaluated current SEMH practise using the School Health Check prior to the visit. The school judged themselves using descriptions in line with OFSTED.
- The external validator interviewed groups of students, parents/carers, staff, Vice Chair of the Trustees and senior leaders.
- Relevant paperwork was presented as stated in the agreed list of documentation.

The school has the following strengths:

Social, Emotional & Mental Health:

- Support for SEMH in this school is outstanding. There is a strong whole school holistic approach which is well led and managed by the Sarah Nowell, Deputy Headteacher, Emily Gledhill, PSHE lead and Daisy Bellis the School MindMate Ambassador lead. The needs of students are well met and managed, using a well embedded whole school approach which all staff are committed to supporting.
- Staff wellbeing is a high priority for the school. The lead for Human Resources has an open-door policy for staff and has created systems and procedures in place to support staff. School has recognised the impact workload has on wellbeing and made changes to decrease workload and create time for staff where possible, such as changing parent/carer evenings and reducing briefing times during parent/carer meeting weeks. There is also an activity-based staff wellbeing offer in place that all staff can access, including Pilates, football and netball. Other practical changes have included creating separate work hubs and social spaces for staff, playing music in the morning throughout school, staff breakfast and small treats throughout the year, for example all staff receiving a chocolate egg at Easter. All staff voiced their appreciation for these changes and the focus the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) have on improving the wellbeing of staff.
- The Deputy Headteacher, who leads on SEMH, is passionate about her work in school, developing meaningful policies, procedures, and processes that support all staff and students. There are clear pathways and procedures in place supporting emotional health and wellbeing in school, about which the students, parents/carers and staff spoke confidently. Everyone is very clear about roles and responsibilities. She has created a real sense of inclusion, cohesion, and community around SEMH.
- The board of trustees for the school is proactive and supportive. The clear commitment to supporting good mental health and wellbeing for all members of the school community was very clear during my phone call with the Vice Chair of the Trustees. The Trustees and SLT work closely together to ensure the right support is in place for everyone.
- The student School MindMate Ambassador (SMMA) team are true advocates for improving mental health and wellbeing. The SMMA I met were very keen to share the excellent work they have been doing in school, including peer support, improving safe spaces dedicated to those who have SEMH needs, producing a magazine for all students and raising the profile

and understanding of how to support and improve mental health, including self-care and signposting. This team are led by Daisy, who is both committed to, and passionate about, the role and has instilled a real sense of meaning and ownership to the role.

- Displays linked to mental health, emotional wellbeing, aspirations, resilience, and growth mindset cover the walls in all shared areas. The SMMA are responsible for these displays and are proud of them and the key messages they convey. Other students can talk about what they mean and why they are important.
- The Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum, which includes teaching about mental health and well-being, is extremely well led and managed by the PSHE lead and has always been a key subject taught in school. Mental health and wellbeing is taught in the Autumn term to all students. All lessons are aligned to the statutory guidance, but lessons are also created in relation to school need and responsive to incidents or behaviours that may occur. Emily, the lead for PSHE, ensures lessons are planned and resourced for staff and staff are well supported to teach PSHE. Emily and Sarah will teach subjects which may be linked to safeguarding and will support in form time where staff may not feel confident in teaching sensitive subjects. The school also uses the My Health, My School data to inform planning.
- There is a tiered, waved approach to the targeted offer which is carefully mapped out. The school uses CPOMS to ensure any concerns are recorded and then Sarah, who is also responsible for safeguarding, ensures all concerns or issues are addressed appropriately, either within the school support systems or with support from external partners. The school works with a number of other agencies, such as Battle Scares, Kooth and the NW area inclusion team. Students also benefit from sessions with the in-school counsellor who is on site three days a week.
- There is a robust, consistent whole school approach to behaviour, under pinned by an excellent policy, which all students understand. The policy is strength based and credits students in every lesson for being ready and doing the right thing. Other credits can be earned, through the 'purple slips' system, which act as a currency for purchasing rewards. Students were positive about this system, commenting on the fact that it is a fair and consistent system. Sanctions are clear and are also well understood. Students commented that staff are quick to act where unacceptable behaviour occurs.
- Students were polite, enthusiastic and emotionally literate. They wanted to share the good things that happen in school and were proud to talk about their school and the support they are offered around their mental health and wellbeing.
- All students spoken to have a real sense of their own responsibility, not only to their learning but for their behaviour too. They are all keen to be excellent citizens and the best that they can be. Personal development of students is planned and extensive. Student voice, on a variety of subjects and issues, is regularly sought and students clearly felt they were valued members of the school community.
- Students reported feeling safe and confident to speak to any member of staff, in particular pastoral staff, if they need support and advice at any time. They understand why it is important to ask for help and who to go to for support. All stakeholders I spoke to mentioned the HELP ME button all students can access for themselves or to report if they have concerns about another student. Students reported there are a number of routes they can access to seek support.
- Relationships within school are strong – student to student, staff to student, staff to staff. Staff described a team ethos where staff also feel safe to ask for help or support.
- Parents were overwhelming positive about the wellbeing needs of their children being met. Transition practices from year 6 to year 7 are well embedded and both parents and students were happy with the transition process, which focuses on the new students feeling safe and supported as they start in year 7.

Quotes from the assessment visit

Students:

- "We can speak to any of the staff, you can talk to whoever you trust."
- "Everyone here is very welcoming, other students are friendly."
- "If I needed help, I know lots of things I could do, speak to a teacher, a School MindMate Ambassador or use the Help Me button on the website."
- "The teachers are supportive; you can talk to them."
- "If there is a problem it does get dealt with. I think it's fair here, we all feel safe."
- "Staff have different roles in school, but we know who to go to for what we need."
- "The curriculum covers mental health; it gets more specific as you move up school."
- "School is preparing us well for university."

Staff:

- "There is a whole school approach to developing good Social, Emotional and Mental Health for all members of the school community."
- "We have a great team here. The people I work with are great."
- "Senior leaders and managers are open and approachable. We feel supported."
- "The Senior Leadership Team are very understanding about family situations."
- "Staff wellbeing is good because the relationships here are strong and SLT are mindful of workload. There is trust and a positive ethos."
- "We have a lot of relevant training, and all staff can access that training. We all had Window of Tolerance training."
- "Developing good SEMH is the key to everything we do. It is always a priority on the School Improvement Plan."
- "The staff team is great, but so are the kids!"

Parents/Governors:

- "Staff work as a unit- they work together closely."
- "The changes that have been made in the last few years have been great. It was a good school, but it's improved on that."
- "The planners are good- very clear about where pupils can go for support. "
- "We get lots of reminders. School is always drip feeding about the importance of good mental health and wellbeing."
- "My child's personal experience and my experiences in school have been very good. Pupils know it is worth saying something, that if they do then something will happen."
- "The student mental health ambassadors are great. They take their role very seriously."
- "There is good communication about the 'whole child'. The cogs all work together really well here."
- "My child was made so welcome in 6th Form; we are really happy she is here."

Thank you for taking the time to be a part of the external validation process and for making me so welcome on the day. I look forward to continuing to work with you and supporting your future SEMH work.

Kind regards

Gill Mullens
Healthy Schools Advisor
Health and Wellbeing Service
Leeds City Council