

CASE STUDY

North Somercotes CE Primary School, Going for Gold The Carnegie Centre of Excellence – Mental Health Award

North Somercotes CE Primary School is a small rural primary school in Lincolnshire, which has prioritised the mental health and wellbeing of the whole school community. In July 2021, the school was awarded the prestigious Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools Award – Gold Standard.



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This is to certify that

North Somercotes CE Primary School

has achieved the



in the

Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental
Health in Schools

School Mental Health Award

Date: July 2021

**Minds
Ahead**

The school has been engaged with the Mobilise Project, Lincolnshire since 2016, working with a cluster of schools to explore a wide-ranging evidence-base to action meaningful school improvement activity relating to emotional health and wellbeing.

Kamila Abualzulof, Deputy Head at North Somercotes has been a Cluster Lead for the project and, with the support of her Headteacher Paul Floyd, has led the direction for the school in relation to emotional health and wellbeing. In 2018-19, it was identified as a priority on the school development plan, and the continued work to identify, implement and develop a whole-school wellbeing ethos has led to the school achieving the Gold Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health in Schools award.

The decision to apply for the award was taken not only to celebrate the school's success but also so that a strong message could be shared with the school community; mental health and wellbeing is a priority here, not just an add-on but very much part of the curriculum and the whole-school approach.

North Somercotes C of E Primary School, Going for Gold

What does leadership of an embedded whole-school strategy for emotional health and wellbeing look like?

Kamila's passion and drive for the whole-school approach to wellbeing is evident. She reflects that having had opportunities through both the Mobilise Project and KYRA to access professional discussion at cluster meetings and through training she has been able to bring a range of knowledge and strategies back to the school to support implementation, This has been the catalyst for the work but the whole school community have committed to the ethos, strategy and actions. One of the biggest take-aways from the process and the coaching conversations for the award, was not to try to do it all by herself, reflects Kamila.

"The more staff I involved and empowered with knowledge and engaged in the strategy, the greater the whole-school ownership. I lead the wellbeing group which incorporates a representative from Governors, the community of staff and parents but I don't have to do it all. I'm the facilitator not the expert and now it is my task to pass the baton, spread the responsibilities across the school community."



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What was the school's experience of the award process?

The process of accreditation for the award explored all aspects of the school's provision, not just what was happening classrooms but also how the leadership of the school supported the mental health and wellbeing of the staff and pupils. The school initially applied in 2019. Following the impact of the pandemic and associated lockdowns the application process was then extended, however Kamila reflects that the evidence and changes in provision implemented to support the whole-school community during this period added an additional layer to the evidence for application.

At the beginning of the process the school accessed a diagnostic tool and following this the process began with a coaching conversation with an independent expert. Kamila found her coach to be supportive and very knowledgeable and felt this brought not only validation to the school's own assessment of strengths, but also identified areas for further development. The coach supported the school to explore what needed to be implemented to improve on the existing provision, and this supported North Somercotes to achieve the prestigious Gold Award.

Following the coaching conversation, the school had a year to work through the objectives set. This, alongside the existing strengths, was then documented in an extensive application form that indicated how the school meets the eight identified areas of focus. *"Anything you do to make the children feel happy and safe at school is something that we have used to evidence our commitment to a mentally healthy school."*

This application was discussed in another coaching conversation at the end of the year, and then the portfolio of evidence was submitted to a panel, where the decision was made to award North Somercotes with a Gold award.

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North Somercotes C of E Primary School, Going for Gold

What does a Gold standard school look like?

There have been key strategies which have supported the evolution of such a strong wellbeing ethos within North Somercotes, including the development of a Wellbeing Framework, strategies to support Emotional Literacy and embedding the NHS Five Ways to Wellbeing into whole-school culture and ethos.

The Wellbeing Framework

Through the work within the Mobilise cluster, the school adapted for their own use, a Wellbeing Framework to make it bespoke to the school; this was the catalyst for changing how the staff team and governors talked about and understood wellbeing. It is a significant tool in the schools' approach, a pathway for wellbeing, a working document which formalises the strategies utilised throughout each level of need in the school.

Strategy for Emotional Literacy

Emotional Literacy has been a key vehicle for improving the whole school approach to emotional wellbeing. Kamila explains, *"we have worked really hard to focus on giving our pupils' voice, we have moved forward from initially developing and extending their emotional vocabulary to giving them the voice to use this vocabulary, checking where they are, giving them the confidence to communicate about how they feel. This has been especially important as we have come out of period of lockdown. Pupils don't just have the language to describe emotions, they can now articulate how it relates to their own experience. We have had to work really hard, the staff team have provided examples, modelling and creating a shared language within the school."*

The NHS Five Ways to Wellbeing

The implementation of the NHS Five Ways to Wellbeing at North Somercotes has been key. It is a constant thread in the school's collective worship; no matter the focus, a link is made to how does this help us, how does this help our wellbeing? Kamila reflects, *"it isn't just what is on the walls, or displays, it is in the conversations we hear around our school - this is what makes the difference."* The North Somercotes staff team has worked hard to ensure the Five Ways to Wellbeing framework is embedded within the curriculum and every aspect of school life.



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What is the Carnegie Centre of Excellence – School Mental Health Award

Information taken from: <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/research/carnegie-centre-of-excellence-for-mental-health-in-schools/mental-health-awards/>

The Department for Education recognises the direct link between positive mental health in schools and successful educational outcomes; the Mental Health Award for Schools builds on this link and provides a framework for educational institutions to evidence policies and initiatives that work towards improving emotional health and wellbeing for both staff and pupils.

An assessor will provide you with an evaluation framework which will help to create a personalised action plan for your school set against the framework criteria

The award takes a whole school approach to mental health and covers eight key areas, each with a series of statements that schools will use to self-evaluate their current practice.

The eight areas are:

- Leadership and strategy
- Organisational structure and culture – staff
- Organisational structure and culture – pupil
- Support for staff
- Support for pupils
- Staff professional development and learning
- Working with parents and carers
- Working with external services

You will develop a portfolio of evidence for your school set against the competencies within the framework. Once submitted, your evidence will be verified against the three levels of bronze, silver and gold. Your school will be awarded The Mental Health Award at the certified level based on the evidence submitted. The award is valid for 3 years before needing reassessment.