



Student Feedback on the Mentally Healthy Environment at **BEECHEN CLIFF**



This is feedback from students across the school about what has helped them to open up/seek support/feel more comfortable with who they are.

Quotes are from members of the student mental health team.

Student Leadership

Having a student lead for mental health. Having a student-led mental health team. Having assemblies mainly run by students. Assemblies are also fantastic in allowing students to tell their stories, which is also cathartic for those that do.

“Student Leadership has definitely been the biggest driver of progress without a doubt and we feel that our voice is heard, whereas all too often adults are dictating what to do on issues affecting us.”

Genuine Interest and Support from the School Leadership Team and Other Staff

This is evident throughout with the whole team eager to provide opportunities to develop and support work on mental health in partnership with students. From the start of Beechen Cliff’s journey, members of staff were inspiring role models, submitting anonymous testimonies about their mental health which were read out in the assemblies, showing that we all struggle, no matter our age. Over 60 teachers have received Solution Focused training to allow them to listen and speak to students in a more compassionate and positive way. Tutors are very supportive and approachable.

“Coming from another school where this wasn’t the case, it honestly means everything. It makes getting help or starting a conversation so much easier”

Students Feel Confident to Talk Among Themselves

The building up of an open environment, where it is ok to show vulnerability, really helps with being able to talk to friends if there is an issue, without fear of judgement. Those in the mental health team noted the power of the Solution Focused training and how it has helped them to have more effective and positive conversations about mental health with each other. Having assemblies run by students from Upper and Lower School promotes integration between the years and allows them to speak to one another more confidently.

“Through the involvement of students across the school in assemblies, sixth formers have engaged with lower school students and everyone has got more confident!”

An Accepting, Open and Inclusive Environment

This is especially helpful for members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Having school as a place to be themselves in the company of accepting people is empowering and can make a change from a home environment.

“The inclusive environment in Beechen allowed me and 7 of my friends to come out and comfortably be our most authentic selves.”

Clarity About What Mental Health and Support Services are on Offer

In addition to mental health posters all around the school, students are often told of all the different support services that are available to them in assemblies, including professional counselling, mentoring and mindful breathing sessions. Being aware of this has many positive effects. It reduces feelings of not knowing what to do in a stressful situation, and it prevents students from being scared to come forward to ask for help. The badges and lanyards of Solution Focused trained staff and students make it easy for a student to know who they can speak to if that feels more comfortable than going to services in school.

“People recognise the badges and lanyards and us [the mental health team] from assemblies, and therefore everyone knows who to go to for support”

The Power of Film

Boys in Mind films have had a huge impact on students in the assemblies. Students from our school are in some of the films and benefit by feeling like they are able to help others and also have a moment of catharsis by being able to tell their own story. Being involved in films also helps with speaking and listening skills.

“Being involved in film projects for Boys in Mind has given me so much more confidence to talk about my own experiences. It has been amazing to see how many more of my friends and other people in the school have opened up after seeing films in assemblies “

Special Days/Events

The *Wear Green Day for Mental Health Awareness* was specifically good at raising awareness, but other days like *Show Racism the Red Card* and the *Rainbow Laces Campaign* are also helpful to maintain the focus on an open and equal environment. The strength of the community is shown at these times, as it is when we have gone through difficult times as a school, when students have also checked up on their teachers, making sure everyone in the school is supported and emphasising that staff wellbeing is also important.

“The Wear Green Day reminded us that everyone is striving towards positive mental health, which can strangely get forgotten sometimes, as well as showing how easily our strong Beechen community can come together for such a good reason.”
