Let's Talk About It

Young people's mental health has become so stigmatized, that it is now shrouded in shame and fear. Most young people are too embarrassed or scared to seek help, whereas others are unaware of what is happening to them because they are uneducated in what mental health is, and the debilitating effects it has on a young person's life.

At St. Monica's, we have a group of pupils dedicated to destigmatizing mental health in our school, the wider community and to let our peers know that they are not alone, that we will support them. Our team is called **'Let's Talk About It'**, our aim is to educate our teachers and students in what mental health is; how to recognise signs and symptoms in themselves and those around them, and how to support those suffering with mental health conditions.

In recent years 90% of schools have reported an increase in the number of pupils suffering with depression, anxiety and stress. Nowadays, young people are under extreme amounts of pressure and not just academically; the pressures of social media, body image, keeping up with peers, the pressure of being like everyone else.

Schools play a key role in developing a young person's life skills. The education system is unbalanced, the main focus is exams and doing well in them. Students wellbeing is no longer a priority, and this has had a detrimental effect on young people's health; leading to the increase of teenage mental health problems and death by suicide.

However, it's not just St. Monica's who have taken the initiative to work within our schools to reduce stigma and help those suffering with mental health. Many schools help students and teachers with the use of mindfulness. Mindfulness is a meditation programme used to relieve stress and anxiety, so that we can know what is going on inside and outside of our minds.

Beliefs surrounding mental health have become distorted and extremely stigmatized. Stigma is a major problem facing those who suffer with mental health problems, they are subjected to ideas that they are somewhat 'different' from what society perceives to be 'normal', this mistaken belief creates feelings of shame and gives society a negative view of mental health.

Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their state of mind; destigmatizing mental health is one step forward.

By Caitlin Fenton & Mia Lazaro