

Two Independent Testimonial:

1. Parent Testimonial in support of Pupil Mental Health Initiative of the Year 2023

"As a parent, I am blown away by the fantastic work that happens at St Elizabeth's to promote positive mental health, well-being and resilience in their pupils. It is evident that all staff and pupils are committed to raising awareness of mental health and there are many ways in which staff at St Elizabeth's support the mental health and well-being of everyone within the school community. One of the ways in which St Elizabeth's has taken action to raise awareness of mental health, challenge stigma and support pupils is by engaging a group of pupils and training them as 'Mental Health Champions'. My son was fortunate to be chosen as a Mental Health Champion and was trained to support fellow pupils across the school with their mental health and well-being. Through this initiative, my son was empowered to encourage pupils to talk about their feelings, worries and anxieties in a safe space, usually within a lunchtime/extra-curricular club. He was then supported to signpost help from staff and reassure pupils that their feelings were heard and understood.

As a parent, it is clear to see how St Elizabeth's school takes the mental health and well-being of its pupils seriously, and I am delighted with how they nurture the whole child, not just academically, but personally, socially and emotionally too. From supporting and promoting awareness of campaigns such as Children's Mental Health Week and Mental Health Awareness Day to equipping children with positive coping strategies, it is wonderful to see how the whole school comes together to share a collective view.

Given the turbulent start to education that many children have faced over the past few years, I feel that the staff at St Elizabeth's Primary School really do go above and beyond to create a safe haven, where children can be themselves and differences are celebrated. My son often comes home with little thoughtful notes of positive affirmations and meaningful quotes (given to him by staff and sometimes other pupils). He has also spoken openly about positive coping strategies he can use when he's feeling worried, anxious or stressed, all of which he has been taught in school.

I feel that St Elizabeth's does really well to incorporate the 5 ways to well-being (as identified by MIND and the NHS) into the curriculum, from spending time learning outdoors and 'Taking Notice' in Forest School, making sure that all children are able to access an excellent PE provision so that they can 'Be Active', and encouraging the idea of 'giving back' by involving children in charity work and school councils. The school also understands the pressures that some children may face as they move through school, and parents are always reminded about healthy habits, for example limiting the time spent on homework and revision to ensure that children are being given time to relax and unwind after a busy day at school.

As soon as you step into St Elizabeth's, you are immersed in a very warm, welcoming and positive space. I would love to see St Elizabeth's be given recognition for the incredible work that they do in this area and feel extremely fortunate that my children have been part of a wonderful community where they are respected, nurtured and given the freedom to flourish."

Kind regards,

Clare Marsh

Date: **15 March 2023**

2. Play Therapist Testimonial in support of Pupil Mental Health Initiative of the Year 2023

I have been working at St Elizabeth's since 2018. In this time, I have watched the school develop a dedicated caring ethos around the children's emotional wellbeing. They offer children and parents a safe space to go to with the learning mentor and pastoral team to discuss worries and concerns. For those children who struggle on a daily basis with low mood or low self-esteem they can access a safe place at lunch and break times.

The school dedicate themselves to supporting all the children with improving emotional wellness.

Recently the school supported not just children who had been identified as needing support with their emotional health. They also ran workshops to all classes on the importance of feeling connected to each other and self. I supported the school with the facilitation of these workshops and they proved to be a massive success.

My weekly support to the school is working with the children identified as those who are most vulnerable to mental health difficulties. I offer the children session where we spend time using play and creativity to support them with their individual struggles. I use a scale approach assessment to see how the sessions are improving the children's emotional wellbeing. It's magical to watch a child go from a 2 to a 7 in the time we have. The children learn, visualization techniques, breathing techniques, mindfulness, work around affirmations. As well as using the doll's house and sand tray to use metaphor and tell their story through play. Extremely powerful stuff.

For this to happen successfully I work closely with the school pastoral team therefore knowing I'm getting the schools most vulnerable children. Those who are on child protection plans or have recently been removed from parents is an example of my sensitive case load.

St Elizabeth's has a complex demographic often my sessions start with the pastoral team providing breakfast for the young people I see. The team are always going the extra mile not just for one or two children, but a large number of children.

St Elizabeth's school has an ongoing approach as I end my work with a child the pastoral team monitors them and offers support with lunch and break groups such as Zumba or crafts.

Emotional wellness at St Elizabeth's is an overall team effort. Not only do the pastoral team, Mentor, attendance officer work with kindness and compassion to families as well as the children. The school office lady greets each late comer with a smile and knows every child's name putting child and adult at ease. Supporting Emotional Wellness is an ethos that runs right through the school. A school from the moment you arrive you feel welcome, safe and accepted. I feel very privileged to be part of this amazing team.

Penny Roscoe-Jones

Date: 21st March 2023