At Towcester CE Primary School, we believe that having good mental health is key to children’s success in school. We have embraced the offer of the NHS Mental Health Support Team’s services over the course of the last academic year. This has made a significant positive impact to many children and families within our community.

To secure the MHST services, we completed the application to be a Mental Health Support Team school. Once assigned a MHST practitioner, an audit was competed, this involved questionnaires for parents, staff and pupils. The outcomes informed the specific and focused plan of provision for our school.

Support is provided in 4 layers:

1. **Workshops**

These focus on a broad range of topics for staff, pupils and parent. For example, sleep workshops for Year 6 pupils; supporting your child’s anxiety for parents; recognising and supporting mental health in children, for staff.

1. **Therapeutic Group work**

This is focused on a theme for children of a similar age; groups of parents can also access parent sessions focused on identified themes. These can be adapted for specific and identified needs.

1. **Individual Support**

Fortnightly consultations with the school’s Mental Health Lead discuss pupils (with parental permission) who may benefit from the MHST’s services, a written referral is then completed by the school’s Mental Health Lead and submitted to the Pupil Referral Management Centre. Provision for the child is planned, this may take the form of sessions with parents alongside or sessions working directly with the child or parent. The MHST offer programmes of around 6 hourly sessions with additional pre and post assessment sessions. In these, aims are set, a programme is chosen and progress is evaluated.

1. **Whole School Workshops, Stalls and Events**

Assemblies can be offered to a whole year group, for example in Mental Health week, or around specific topics for specific year groups as required. They will also attend events, offering to run an information sharing stall aimed at students or parents.

At Towcester, a regular bank of MHST staff come into school and run the sessions during the school day. The service also offers to run the sessions at a local GP surgery if families prefer this option.

We have been fortunate to be able to offer parent workshops on ‘recognising and supporting emotions’ for parents, we offered an ‘open surgery’ for parents to bring their individual questions and receive individual advice and guidance. In addition, our Year 5 and 6 children have accessed a ‘Sleep Hygiene’ workshop, whilst Year 6 have learnt about ‘Managing Our Emotions’ workshop. Also last year, 25 pupils were supported by the MHST with individual 1:1 support either working directly with the child or parent.

**An example of a student’s programme:**

Student’s goals:
1. To be able to regulate my emotions by the ned of the sessions

2. To be able to manage my anger by the end of the sessions

Student’s 6 session programme:

* Psychoeducation on anger
* The flight, fright, freeze response,
* Relaxation and distraction activities
* Unhelpful thinking styles
* Thought challenging
* Anger toolbox
* Staying well plan

What the child says at the end of the programme:

*‘By teaching me how to identify the physical signs that I am becoming dysregulated and teaching me calming techniques which help me to stay in the classroom and focus on my learning. As a result, I am way calmer both at home and at school.’ Year 4 student.*

What the MHST staff says at the end of the programme:

*‘The child has progressed really well during treatment and has engaged really well in our sessions. Within sessions he reported that he has been able to manage his anger better in school and in certain situations’.*

Another Parent says:

*‘After the individual sessions with the MHST, there has been a huge contrast to before. She seems more settled and able to regulate and wants to come to school.’*

The school has benefitted from the specialised and supportive work of the Mental Health Team in the services that it has offered. Other benefits have also been achieved as our Learning Mentor (ELSA) has also been able to focus her time on Communication and Interaction interventions for example, Lego Therapy, Cookery groups and Drawing and Talking knowing that pupils’ mental health needs are being expertly supported by the Mental Health Support Team.

This academic year, we look forward to continuing to grow our Mental Health support within our school community in partnership with the Mental Health Support Team. They really have made a difference to the life of the school, to our children and to our parents.