

## **Healthy Mental Health Day**

It was lovely to make a little visit back into school after a long few weeks in college to see that something amazing had been organised by staff and visitors for the Stockport School community. Myself and James were very grateful to be invited back into school by Mr Modral, to see all the time and hard work he had put into organising a 'Healthy Mental Health Day' – a rota of activities and workshops set up for each year group to get them talking and learning about mental health and relationships.

We started off by listening to Mr Williamson speak about dementia, helping to raise awareness to the students by introducing them to 'Dementia Friends': an organisation that encourages them to be part of a wider local community outside of school, to engage with older people in the area who may frequently feel distant from the rest of the society, and to help challenge the stigma of mental disorders among the elderly. Next, we visited the Mental Health Fayre that took place in the gym, where visitors from outside of school had set up stalls focusing on different issues surrounding mental health and relationships, and this was successful in enlightening and educating the students on many topics that aren't widely spoken about on a day to day basis, perhaps in lessons or with friends and family. We also visited a workshop where couples came into speak to the students about their own relationships and how to be a good boyfriend/girlfriend. This was our personal favourite; it was lovely to see them speak about each other and their relationship with such comfortableness and intimacy, and it was also refreshing to see the students acting maturely, engaging with them and plucking up the courage to ask them questions about their lives and how they made their relationship last. Finally, Mr Modral introduced a new smartphone app to the students that looked amazing: it provided complete confidentiality whilst offering a network for the students to talk about how they were feeling and activities to help better their mental health, like reading inspirational and uplifting quotes, meditation, steady breathing or visiting the 'Zen Garden.' It looks like something that will be hugely popular with the students and that will make them more comfortable when it comes to talking about feelings!

All in all, it was an incredible day of workshops that had been set up for the students – we were only there for an hour, but the school looked extremely busy and like it was thriving in the vast amount of activities that were on offer to them. It was so nice and reassuring to see the school taking a huge step in dealing with the stigmas surrounding the issues of mental health, getting the students talking about it and doing so successfully, as it looked like a fun and enjoyable day for all involved!

**Fariyal Qureshi, ex-Student**