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Gulval School is first Thrive School of Excellence in England for mental health focus

Gulval School near Penzance has been awarded Thrive Ambassador status for all its work on improving mental health in children

12 February 2021



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Paul Baker, headteacher of Gulval School with some pupils at the school farm (Image: Gulval School)

A Penzance primary school has been named as the first Thrive School of Excellence in England for supporting the mental health wellbeing of its pupils.

Gulval School has been named as a School of Excellence by Thrive, an organisation which trains teachers and other education professionals to support the emotional and social development of all children.

The award recognises schools making a positive impact on their pupils, and on the wider community, by prioritising emotional wellbeing and creating an environment in which children's wellbeing thrives.

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As part of the initiatives launched by the school to improve pupils' mental health was the establishment of a school farm with vegetable growing, chickens and goats and having a school dog, to encourage children to try out different activities such as caring for animals and selling vegetables grown on site at a special pop-up shop.

Paul Baker, the headteacher at the school in Gulval, Cornwall, said: "This is a journey we have worked so passionately towards for many years now and to get this external recognition for doing is just fantastic for all of our staff, pupils and parents."

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really has made a huge difference to our children and families. Attendance has increased and we've been able to directly support children who may feel anxious about the events of this last year. We are passionate that all children should feel a deep sense of belonging, that they are valued and feel special.

"One way we achieve this is through our responsibility program where children, among other roles, can take responsibility for our animals here in school. We also provide a curriculum based on adventure too - last year 10 children aged between six and 11 beamed from ear-to-ear as they stood on the summit of Snowdon in gale force wind and driving rain, an expedition I was so proud to lead."

The School of Excellence award is the highest level of achievement in Thrive's Ambassador Schools scheme, which was launched last year as a way of recognising excellence in member schools.

There are five areas in which schools can evidence how they use Thrive to support children's social and emotional development including environment, leadership, right-time, reparative and relationship, with the School of Excellence award reserved for schools that achieve the highest standard across all five categories.

Rose Webb, Thrive's South West relationship manager, said: "Gulval has done a fantastic job in embedding the Thrive Approach across the whole school. All staff have a great understanding of the approach and are able to play their part in bringing it into lessons across the school day.

"Gulval has changed things not just for its pupils, but also the wider community, and has been a powerful force for raising aspirations and bringing people together. The school really deserves to be recognised in this way."

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