



Sensory garden which will support children's mental health almost complete at Misterton Primary School



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The finishing touches are now being made to a sensory garden at Misterton primary school which will help to support pupils' mental health.

The garden has been created at Misterton Primary School thanks to Help Me, I'm Fine, a charity set up by Helen Cousin after her daughter, Maisie, committed suicide in June 2017.

Fundraising for the garden has been helped by a number of businesses and individuals, including Thrive, which has chosen Help Me, I'm Fine as its charity of the year.

Thrive has developed a specific way of working with children that supports their social and emotional wellbeing. It draws on neuroscience and attachment theory and has created a systematic approach to the early identification of emotional and social developmental needs in children.

Misterton Primary School has staff who are trained in the Thrive Approach to support children who may be experiencing emotional difficulties.

Helen works as a teaching assistant at the school and believes that supporting the emotional health of children in primary school will give them the tools they may need as teenagers to cope with life's ups and downs, ultimately reducing the likelihood of other teenagers taking their own lives.

Helen, who founded Help Me, I'm Fine, after Maisie's death as a way of helping other children to deal with their emotions, believes the garden will make a big difference to children at the school.

She said: "The garden is going to be wonderful. It's almost finished now but we want to wait until spring to open it so we can get some really colourful plants in there."

When it is opened, the garden will offer children who are struggling with difficult emotions a place to take a break and relax.

It will also be used during lessons which focus on nature, the weather and wildlife, as well as providing a peaceful area for group activities such as story time.

The garden has a decking area, a large wildlife pond, grass, raised beds, a weather station, a water feature as well as windchimes, colourful mirrors and planters to create a restful environment which is full of sensory experiences.

Viv Trask-Hall, principal trainer for Thrive, said: "We've been delighted to support the work to build this sensory garden at Misterton.

"Helen and many others have worked tirelessly to create an area that will give pupils outdoor space to relax and feel calm, whatever else is going on in their lives. The garden will enrich pupils' lives and give them space to be curious, to play and to reflect."

Thrive was established more than 25 years ago as a way of helping children to become more emotionally resilient so that they can better manage their behaviour and communicate their needs.

Initially conceived as a way of tackling the issue of school exclusions, the Thrive Approach has broadened into a way of helping adults to prepare children for life's ups and downs.

Thrive's founders have backgrounds in teaching, education, social work and psychotherapy and the Thrive Approach is underpinned by a robust framework of neuroscience, attachment theory and child development research.

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